The Values that You Hold

Encountering Change in an Adult Community Education Program in Victoria

Volume 1

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October, 2006
Statement of Originality
&
Acknowledgements

This research was carried out since the commencement of research approval and is the work of M. J. Curlewis except where it is acknowledged. It has not previously been submitted in part or total for any other academic award.

Signed: ______________________________________________

I would like to thank many people for their support during the years I spent on this research. Firstly I want to thank my family—David, Jan, Colin, Carol and Jim and their own families—for the many hours I spent at my desk when they needed my company. To my sisters, thank you for your encouragement.

Secondly, I am very grateful to my supervisors: Drs Jack Keating (2 years), Scott Phillips (1 year) and Shane Muldoon (3 years), who provided me with encouragement and advice, and to Heather Porter at RMIT who frequently threw me an administrative lifeline.

Thirdly, I want to give a very big thank you to the people of MAE, especially my 18 interviewees who gave so generously of their time, ideas and memories.
This thesis research reports on the Adult Community Education (ACE) sector in the Australian State of Victoria. Although it concentrates on Moreland Adult Education Assoc. (MAE) as a case study, it places MAE in the wider context of ACE in the local area of the Northern Metropolitan region of Melbourne.

Although periodically referred to as the ‘fourth educational sector’ and funded by the same government departments as mainstream post-secondary sectors, ACE has always had a low profile and quasi-educational status due to the extreme variety of its venues, courses and locations, making it difficult to define and market as an entity.

This study uses a range of qualitative methodologies suited to historical, educational research to provide a framework based around the initial guiding questions: ‘Is ACE becoming TAFE?’ and ‘Who uses ACE and Why?’

MAE was used as a case study because it was created by its local community in 1982 after which it expanded and developed from one-to-one pairs of volunteer tutors and literacy students to being a nationally Registered Training Organisation delivering accredited courses up to Diploma level. This expansion placed great strain on the infrastructure and personnel of the organisation, particularly during the main period of this research (1994 to 2004).

Beginning with a review of the ACE sector, the thesis then describes the northern region of the Melbourne suburbs by using the data gained from a survey questionnaire. Further narrowing the research focus, the thesis analyses the development of the organisation over the ten year study period. The second half of the thesis emphasises the people of MAE through 18 interviews by analysing their opinions, life-experiences and perceptions of change to create a sense of their connectedness to the local community and MAE.

The primary aims of this thesis are to document an example of the development of an ACE centre and how it managed change during a ten year period. It records a sense of how and why people engaged in the sector and some of their lived-experiences and their responses to changes. Data analysis results in three sets of findings and propositions in the categories of sectoral, organisational and personal. These key findings involve a range of externally applied pressures being brought to bear on both ACE and MAE. This is counteracted by individual resistance to change, creating a tension which threatens MAE’s long-term sustainability.
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<td>Appendix 2:C</td>
<td>CInterviewFerhatAnnotated.doc</td>
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<td>Appendix 2:R</td>
<td>RInterviewTomAnnotated.doc</td>
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GLOSSARY OF WORDS, ACRONYMS AND TERMS

1994 For this study, 1994 refers to the period spanned by that calendar year and also the 1994-1995 financial year—both of which were used by the organisation being researched.

2004 For this study, 2004 refers to the period covered by 2004-2005. Although MAE altered its legal financial year to coincide with the calendar year, financial reporting for taxation and salary purposes remained the same.

2005 and 2006 Data which became available during the research has been referred to by its later date if it clarifies or updates earlier data.

ACE Adult Community Education.

ACEVic Adult Community Education of Victoria—an organisation supporting ACE Centres in Victoria, similar to a union for committees.

ACFEB Adult, Community and Further Education (Board)—a separate section of the Office of Training and Tertiary Education which is a division of the Department of Education in Victoria.

AEA Adult Education Association (in Victoria).

ALBE Adult Literacy and Basic Education—usually teaching literacy, language and numeracy to adults from absolute beginners to pre-VCE level, that is, approximately year 10.

ALBSU Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit—a group formed in Great Britain in the mid 1970’s which published literacy resources.

AMEP Adult Migrant Education Program—510 hours of Free English teaching funded by DIMIA.

AMES Adult Migrant Education Service.

ANTA Australian National Training Authority—name later changed to DEST.

AQF Australian Qualifications Framework.

AQTTF Australian Quality Training Framework.

ASF Australian Standards Framework.

ASLPR Australian Second Language Proficiency rating.

Bricoleur From Levi-Strauss’s term for a ‘jack of all trades’ approach to the integration of methods.

Bricolage

BSA Basic Skills Agency—later name for the former ALBSU of Great Britain.

CAEA* Coburg Adult Education Association.

CALA* Coburg Adult Literacy Association.

CALD Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

CALG* Coburg Adult Literacy Group.

CAQDAS Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software.

CBT Competency Based Training.

CCT Compulsory Competitive Tendering.

CES Commonwealth Employment Service (now Centrelink)—a Nationally funded service to deal with un/employment issues.

Coding: Terms used by Corbin and Strauss to describe types of coding of qualitative data.

Open, Axial, Selective
Concepts, Categories, Propositions
Terms used by Glaser in grounded theory to indicate basic units of analysis which are potential indicators of phenomena, each one becoming increasingly conceptual.

Closed questions
Questions which invite a limited response such as a yes or no answer.

CPI
Consumer Price Index.

DEET
Department of Education, Employment and Training.

DEETYA
Department of Employment, Education and Youth Affairs.

DEST
Department of Science and Training (formerly ANTA).

DIMIA
Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs.

Dip FE
Diploma of Further Education—an alternate tertiary entry course.

Dip LA
Diploma of Liberal Arts—an alternate tertiary entry course.

Double-dipping
The practice of reporting the same students and classes to more than one funding body.

DVLC
Diamond Valley Learning Centre.

ESL
English as a Second Language.

Fee-for-Service
A course which is entirely funded by the participants and not subsidized by any funding source.

Grounded Theory
Grounded theory is a general research method for behavioural science developed by the sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967. It categorises empirically collected data to build theories.

HE
Higher Education (usually University).

ILCM
Interim Literacy Course Matrix.

ISLPR
International Second Language Proficiency Rating.

LearnLinks
A network established by RMIT with a group of Community partners in the western and northern suburbs of Melbourne.

LGA
Local Government Area. In Moreland, this covered a large number of former suburbs such as Coburg, Brunswick, Fawkner, Glenroy, Merlynston and Oak Park.

MAE*
Moreland Adult Education Assoc.

MID
Mildly Intellectually Disabled.

MOU
Memorandum of Understanding—a document of agreed factors which may not be enforceable in a court.

NEIS
New Enterprise Incentive Scheme—a federal government scheme to assist unemployed people set up their own business.

Nesb
Non-English Speaking Background.

NMIT
Northern Melbourne Institute of Technology.

NTEU
National Tertiary Education Union.

OETTE
Office of Education, Training and Tertiary Education.

OH&S
Occupational Health and Safety.

Open questions
Questions which cannot be answered yes or no, and invite a more detailed response.

OTFE
Office of Further Education.

OTTE
Office of Training and Tertiary Education.

Respondents
67 people in Northern Metropolitan region of ACFE who did surveys.

Risk
The identification, assessment, allocation and monitoring of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>risks associated with an organisation/situation/project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Matrix</td>
<td>A table which presents all possible risks and their level of importance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling</td>
<td>The practice of enrolling students at any time in a course, that is with no cut-off start date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMIT</td>
<td>Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTO</td>
<td>([Nationally] Registered Training Organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCH</td>
<td>Student Contact Hour (a rate of hourly payment for each student).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIP</td>
<td>Special Intervention Project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td>A society of people, companies and institutions working together to ensure that it can function effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Technical and Further Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tender</td>
<td>The process of inviting applications, evaluating bids and contracting with the most successful applicant. Also the submitted document.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U3A</td>
<td>University of the Third Age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td>Unlimited Potential—a project funded by Microsoft between 2004 and 2006 to offer free computer training and access to disadvantaged children and adults around the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCAA</td>
<td>Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VALBEC</td>
<td>Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VALG</td>
<td>Victorian Adult Literacy Grant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCE</td>
<td>Victorian Certificate of Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VU</td>
<td>Victoria University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syzygy</td>
<td>An archetypal pairing of opposite sexes, symbolising the communication of the conscious and unconscious minds without the loss of identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note* The later Moreland Adult Education Assoc Inc. had 4 names during incorporation.
- 1982-3 Coburg Adult Literacy Group
- 1983-4 Coburg Adult Literacy Assoc Inc.
- 1994 Coburg Adult Education Assoc Inc. (briefly)
- 1995 Moreland Adult Education Assoc Inc.
1. INTRODUCTION

“The ACE sector is well placed to engage in strategic research because it has a clear and persuasive idea of its own identity and of the values that animate it. These are very robust and enduring values and they centre around three key ideas or cornerstones—the student, the programs and the community” (Professor Helen Praetz, RMIT University, 1997)

This study researches Victoria’s Adult Community Education (ACE) centres, concentrating specifically on one organisation in the northern suburbs of Melbourne as a case study. The term ‘ACE centre’ refers to community-based education and recreational programs which are usually registered in the state of Victoria as incorporated, not-for-profit associations. They provide a range of educational and recreational courses and groups which are usually delivered in a specific locality. Because of the diversity of the courses offered, the range of public, private and government-owned venues and different localities, ACE is a difficult concept to define, denoting its flexibility but also providing both its strength and its weakness. In Victoria, many are funded by the Adult, Community and Further Education Board (ACFEB) which is part of the Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE), which in turn is a division of the Victorian Department of Education, but ACE centres have a multiplicity of origins and have many and varied sources of funding.

The ‘Values’ to which the title refers are commonly expressed in the Vision Statement of ACE organisations such as MAE relating to support for disenfranchised community members and dedication to empowerment through education.

1.1 Chapter Outline

This first chapter introduces ACE as the educational sector under discussion. Although it is technically considered to be the fourth sector of education within the post-secondary area and is funded within that category, in fact it is almost invisible to
many people. Unless people have participated or had family and friends involved in the programs, there is very little recognition of ACE, so it has not managed to overcome its status as a quasi-educational sector, despite the rhetoric of the 1990’s during which research projects such as the ‘Cinderella Report’ promised a legitimacy which would potentially result in sustainable funding and public recognition (*Come In Cinderella: The Emergence of Adult and Community Education*, 1991).

This introduction provides an overview of the study, commencing with an historical summary of the origins of ACE, beginning with the national aspect and moving through the state to the northern suburbs of Melbourne which provide the setting for the research by examining one single adult education organisation as a case study. It then uses a group of interviewees to provide not only information, but also a subjective and very individualised view of those who participate in ACE.

These informants have provided all of the quotations which are placed in themed groups for discussion, within shaded boxes throughout this work, to emphasise the importance of the input from the people who developed such ‘grass-roots’ organisations, and because their information clarified or reinforced statements, or provided clear arguments against a point of view, expanding its relevance.

The difficulties faced and an outline of the claim to originality and transferability, precede a section which provides a synopsis of the content of each of the nine chapters of this study. In brief, this chapter then covers a summary of the aims of the research, the ethical considerations and a conclusion.

**1.2 Focus of the Research**

The research commenced with a number of notions around which the study was planned. It developed a number of emerging themes which became the main focus as
the study expanded. The initial impetus for the work came from a realisation that both the participants and the sector were often invisible within both mainstream education and within the wider society. The sector had a low profile and was poorly marketed—although individual centres often possessed a very high local profile.

Box 1.1: ACE, the Invisible Sector

“I think it’s invisible. …The State government agencies have done absolutely nothing to introduce the Victorian community to this third part of the tertiary sector, as a cost effective and efficient and viable alternative.”
Mike, lines: 325-331

“When I first came into it, I got a sense that it still wasn’t really taken seriously in some forms, in some ways, by some people often working in higher education, further education sectors.”
May, lines: 145-147

The participants in many ACE programs were often marginalised socially and economically, because ACE targets high-priority groups such as the unemployed, both recent and long-term migrants, the unemployed, Kooris, and people with disabilities. These participants can be doubly disadvantaged because of the lack of educational recognition afforded to the education they have received in an ACE centre despite rhetoric to the contrary and government policies on mutual recognition of accreditation.

One of the factors from which this study was originally conceived was from hearing participants state over a number of years that they felt ACE centres were changing their traditional stakeholders and losing their intrinsic individualism. Many of those adults most in need of the support of ACE centres had asked if programs were becoming replicas of mainstream training institutes.
To examine the instigating notions behind this work, a range of research methods were used, including historical research of an educational organisation, inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative data, and individual case studies. Some of the questions which developed during the study included questioning who were—and are—the users of the sector, and what were the main influences apparently causing change to many of Victoria’s distinctive, community-based adult education programs? The study also asks if ACE centres are becoming increasingly distanced from their community ‘grass-roots’ origins, adopting corporate behaviour and dialogue and becoming small training and further education institutes or, more succinctly: Is ACE becoming TAFE?

However, even during the initial stages of the research, it became obvious that other aspects of ACE would be emerging as subjects for study. Part of the early communications with both survey respondents and interviewees created one of the alternate areas which became a large part of the study: the stakeholders who engage in ACE. Not only did this interest apply to people as participants but it kept the idea of the engagement within the research foremost, constantly requiring personal re-examination of the connections between the esoteric bonding of participants, the research and the researcher and the exoteric, but related, educational sectors, by asking ‘Who uses ACE and why?’.

The research was also suggested by a number of comments resulting from the original statement in the ‘Cinderella’ report which claimed that research into ACE in Australia was a sadly neglected field both within academic institutions and outside them (Come In Cinderella: The Emergence of Adult and Community Education, 1991).
This statement was reiterated during Helen Praetz’s introduction to an Adult Community Education (ACE) conference called ‘Speaking Back’ (Praetz, 1997). In her keynote address, she emphasised both the need for community educators to engage in research to legitimise the sector, and the importance of articulating the social and personal benefits such as educational pathways, building self-esteem and lifelong learning, which are the universal values of ACE (Praetz, 1997, p. 48). The ‘values’ to which Praetz refers are the core values of ACE which build on the tenets that respect and enhance the personal values and cultures of each one of its participants.

These values are constantly referred to by workers in the field, and repeatedly reinforced by committees of management, especially when juggling the demands of an increasingly competitive business environment, and trying to maintain a community development focus.

Box 1.2: Working in ACE

“The main thing I love most about working in ACE is actually sitting down and working with people and talking to people about what their life plans are, or what they want to see for themselves in the future. And actually just facilitating, helping to facilitate that in a way to someone who’ll come in and have all these dreams or aspirations or fears. That you can actually be part of that, helping them sort of get where they want to go. That’s the main thing. If I couldn’t do that in my job, I wouldn’t work in ACE.”

May, lines: 406-412

“I was offered a job at TAFE and AMES, but I chose to stay with ACE because of—I believe this is what a lot of people want, you know, from bilingual backgrounds. And women who’ve lived for a long time and the opportunities were taken away because of their bodies and concern for the well-being of the family. They come here, they really want to learn. At the same time they interact with others. I don’t think you’ll get it anywhere else.”

Rani, lines: 488-512
These values are referred to in the title of this study in the belief that they still provide a clear guiding light which remains the primary focus of ACE programs, despite the constant diversions into fears of loss of funding and the milieu of pressure to change.

This study examines a series of major influences causing change which impacted most significantly on the ACFE-funded programs which comprise the majority of ACE programs in Victoria. It asks when and how these changes have occurred to the ACE sector, why they were implemented and about their impact on providers and individual lives to ask, firstly, how the sector’s stakeholders have been affected, and to what degree the sector is ‘becoming’—or not becoming—another series of TAFEs. As these were initial questions, a number of other emerging propositions also became apparent during the progress of the exploration.

It was thus an intention of this study to research MAE as part of the sector known as Adult Community Education; its participants, the major influences on its development and sustainability, and to follow a line of investigation to document a lesser-known educational sector which has persisted in reinventing itself in an effort to survive despite poor marketing, little branding and diminishing funding.

### 1.3 Historical Aspect

The background to adult education in the English-speaking world is historically complex. In Britain, Wycliffe and the Lollards (Cloud, 1996) predicted the dissenter’s contention that their followers should read directly from religious texts and not rely on priests or intermediaries, thereby encouraging their protestant followers to become readers—although many could not write so cannot be called literate by modern standards. Along with religious, economic and social influences,
the ability to read was partially responsible for the instigation of the Mechanic’s Institutes of the 1820’s in Britain which had considerable influence on the education of English-speaking adults.

1.1.1 Australia

This influence transported to the colonies where the government has always been involved in adult education in Australia, (Whitelock, 1974) although many moves were initiated by churches and philanthropists such as Frances Ormond (Ling, 1984). Although primarily intended to “restrict the classes as far as possible to purely technical subjects” (Ling, 1984, p.107), an increasing emphasis on the self-esteem building and social value of education for adults predicted mainstream acceptance of concepts such as Social Capital, Valuing Diversity and Lifelong Learning.

The formative history of adult education and its transportation to Australia has been extensively documented in a history of adult education (Whitelock, 1974). Subsequent individual movements and initiatives such as the Working Men’s Colleges in NSW and Victoria have been documented by Ling (1984). A range of publications on the Council of Adult Education in Victoria have also been published, for example in Peters (1994), which can be seen as the next stage in a continuum pre-empting the development of regional and suburban centres for community education.

The neighbourhood house movement, refuges, childcare issues and availability, and many social movements have impacted on the development of community adult education; however, for the sake of this study, these formative factors are assumed.

Victoria

In 1991, a Senate Standing Committee completed a report on the ACE sector known as the first of two ‘Cinderella’ Reports. The report was ambitiously aimed at
legitimising ACE as an educational sector by providing a number of points aimed at defining its aims, recognising its lack of profile because it was “grossly inefficient for governments to ignore or neglect the remarkable education and training capacity of the extensive network of community-based providers which already exists” (Come In Cinderella: The Emergence of Adult and Community Education, 1991, p.19).

Up until that time, in Victoria, most small local educational programs were conducted by committees of management comprised of local resident volunteers. They delivered a narrow but successful range of one-to-one literacy tuition and small classes. Some centres—particularly neighbourhood houses—ran recreational groups, while educational courses tended to be in adult literacy and basic education, road rules, life-survival skills for adult students with mild intellectual disabilities and older migrant women who were long-term residents. Most students tended to be socially marginalised due to a complex range of social, familial and personal factors.

Introduction of general preparatory courses, learning technologies and vocational education followed. During the late nineties, the Conceptual Framework for Further Education (Bradshaw, 1997) was introduced in Victoria, and a series of reports (Teese, 1997; R. Teese, 1998; R Teese, 1998) and Kirby (August, 2000) impacted on both the secondary and tertiary sectors as well as ACE.

Box 1.3: Common Influences

“So I see the same economic rationalist forces bearing down on all the three organizations. I think they’ve all got that in common. Having to deal with that, those three sectors. But they’ve dealt with it in different ways. I think the ACE sector of all has tried hardest to keep—the, I suppose you might call community development project, for want of a better word, to the fore—at great cost to itself and its workers I have to add.”

Biddy, lines: 726-731
1.3.3 Northern Suburbs

Within Victoria, replicating the mainstream education sectors of the state government-funded and authorised primary and secondary schools, the ACFE Board defined a number of regions for their funded ACE centres. The organisation this research uses as a case study is within the Northern Metropolitan Region of ACFE. Although there are some differences in the local government areas which are included in this region, the western third—where the Moreland Adult Education program is situated—is comprised of the traditionally working class suburbs which stretch from Brunswick in the south, through Coburg and is bordered by the Hume area in the north.

The context area in which most of this research is centred is the former suburb of Coburg which is characterised by its high percentage of migrants, its self-defined attachment to its traditional working class roots and its positioning with direct public transport routes in every direction, particularly being along the major highway to Sydney.

The tentative instigation of the Coburg Adult Literacy Group in 1982 to 1983—which was to have three names (see Glossary) before becoming the present Moreland Adult Education, commenced within an area still dominated by its proximity to the jail, struggling to maintain viable sporting teams and even its state secondary schools many of which were closed by 2006.

The development of MAE which is documented in Chapter 4 provides the formative genesis for ACE programs, clearly tracing the unpaid work, vision and enthusiasm of its instigators. The formation of the Learnlinks project in 1999, which is briefly described in Chapter 5, provides an example of how current models develop
from externally funded projects, are promoted to ACE through ACFE and often prove both unsustainable and contrary to the values of the program. While the third development—the Diploma of Further Education (Dip FE) which is also in Chapter 5—provides the most effective example of both the changes which have occurred in ACE and its resistance to those changes. It incorporates ACE values and is inclusive of ACE’s target groups, yet maintains an unsustainable frailty of existence. Its ambivalence is demonstrated by its success which—through its promotion of pathways—creates the most successful of tertiary bridging courses by syphoning participants into TAFEs and Universities, thereby promoting itself as the least worthy alternative sector. Yet the fragile and unstable status which was reinforced by the small number of providers delivering the course provides a paradigm for the tenuous and persistently peripheral status of ACE itself.

1.4 Difficulties

By 2005, some ACE organisations taught tertiary entry courses such as the Diploma of Further Education (Dip FE) and many delivered a range of vocational courses in a diversity of subjects and delivery modes. Many people at all levels of the sector had questioned the relevance of being coerced by funding bodies into the imperialist standards and practices of mainstream education. They also questioned the emphasis placed on the acquisition of work-related skills and knowledge, the drive for sustainability measured by economic prosperity and successful disposal (‘pathwaying’) of Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) access and equity participants into tertiary institutes, where they may—or may not—have completed courses.

Despite the disparity and diversity of the many programs which characterised the sector, their commonality was expressed through their registration as non-profit
incorporated associations, their community-owned and managed status, plus a commitment to individualised empowerment. This sense of autonomy and self-direction provided its strength yet also made it vulnerable to political and economic pressures. It also made the sector difficult to document. It could not be defined by its venues, its stakeholders, its level of funding, or even the origins of its funding. ACE programs could be housed in neighbourhood houses and community centres, libraries, shop-fronts, schools, scout halls, ethnic or age-specific centres, former railway stations and churches. Its participants may be from any or all of fifty cultural groups, only English-speakers, teenagers, seniors, people with specific disabilities, the unemployed, parents returning to work, or just people with shared interests.

This inability to define the sector can explain why it remained almost invisible because it was difficult to market such a chameleon-like entity. This also created some difficulty for this study, making it difficult to justify in terms of legitimate historical educational research.

1.5 Transferability and Significance

Although specifically addressing the ACE sector, this research is equally applicable to many others, especially those perceived as having a matriarchal quality due to predominantly female personnel, an amorphous rather than hierarchical structure, and a stronger emphasis on qualitative rather than quantitative outcomes.

Although an existing body of work relating to aspects of the ACE sector—for example, the youth/ACE intersection (Young People in ACE Project: Final Report, Working Draft 2, 2003,) and the introduction of the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA) (Sanguinetti, 1998)— have been explored, the research in this
thesis can claim to branch out from existing research and be original for three main reasons:

First, it used one of the most ethnically-diverse, traditionally industrial suburban ACE programs as the organisational case study, as distinct from large educational institutes such as the Centre for Adult Education (CAE).

Secondly, it demonstrated aspects of the sector which had not been previously documented, such as the ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ development of projects in the sector and their varying levels of sustainability. The aetiology of these initiatives, such as the LearnLinks network, Dip FE and organisational origins of MAE, are researched and monitored in some detail to expose and identify their relevance for students and sustainability of funding.

Thirdly, by incorporating a range of participations as survey respondents and interviewees, the research did not target a single strand of users, but considered the people (students, staff, committee members and volunteers) participating in ACE to be a homogeneous community with shared interests and characteristics. An additional aim of the research was to give a ‘voice’ to disenfranchised adult students who had not previously succeeded in any of the mainstream educational sectors.

1.6 Limitations

Three main factors limited the breadth of reference and restricted this research. First, by limiting the focus on ACE through the Victorian ACFE-funded sector—although reference was made to national influences and policies, especially relating to diversity, alternate tertiary entry and lifelong learning. This limitation existed because the form of ‘ACFE’ funded-sector under discussion was unique to the state of Victoria while its amorphous and diverse nature provided both its greatest
strengths and its greatest weaknesses it also made it impossible to document the number of variables. Instead, this study focused on MAE, which was examined as a paradigm in the knowledge that it was a single example and not necessarily typical of the organisations within ACE which are extremely diverse.

Secondly, the information gained from the survey respondents placed MAE in the context of the northern metropolitan region of ACFE to get a sense of whether or not people’s attitudes to ACE change was constant throughout the region, but also to determine if people engaging in other centres had similar opinions and issues.

Thirdly, concentrating on Moreland Adult Education (MAE) as an exemplar for a community owned and managed provider, created the impression that all ACE organisations conduct the same programs and are funded under the same categories. MAE delivered all educational areas funded by the ACFE sector: Adult Literacy and Basic Education, English as a Second Language, Employment Skills, Victorian Certificate in Education (VCE) and Vocational Education, but many other centres did not. Unlike MAE, most other centres also delivered the category of General Education which covered recreational or enrichment courses.

MAE being used as a model was also due to its involvement in online teaching and innovative learning networks, integration of managing diversity policies and projects due to a high migrant population and its participation in a five year AMEP tender with RMIT, NMIT and two other ACE organisations to deliver 510 hours of English for the Department of Immigration, Multiculturalism and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA). In addition, the organisation at various times engaged in the delivery of DEETYA-funded ‘Special Intervention Project’ and Work for the Dole employment programs. Other factors included the fact that it was managed by a committee which
accurately represented the demographics of Moreland, and its status was typical in that it had an alienated position outside of mainstream education.

1.7 Aims

Attempting to incorporate sensitivity to the core values of ACE and self-esteem of participants with objective research methodologies was both time-consuming and possibly less effective than maintaining a strictly objective, academic approach. However, as the aim of the research was tripartite, this *bricolage* of methods is deliberate. These three aims have remained constant throughout the study: Firstly to empower those participants often alienated from traditional educational and other social bureaucracies. Secondly, to complete research by participants as suggested by Praetz to legitimise the sector and promote it at a legitimate fourth educational sector. Thirdly, to achieve one of the few academic records of a Victorian ACE centre.

1.8 Ethical Considerations

Dealing with human beings in research emphasised the awareness of the fragility of peoples’ personal and familial cultures, and the ease with which a power imbalance could be tilted by language, environment and the physical impediments of research—taping, transcripts, letters using academic language and unfamiliar processes.

Because students enrolled in ACE to learn literacy and English with other skills and knowledge—and some had disabilities requiring support—many had fragile self-esteem and little knowledge of their ‘rights’ as students, such as to privacy and refusal to participate in research or have photographs taken for publicity. Every attempt was made during this research to avoid creating situations which preyed on these vulnerabilities. Although some of the most interesting and evocative ‘stories’ were lost because of this decision, those stakeholders quoted and researched were
fully briefed and cognisant of their rights to change their minds, to remain anonymous and participate within their self-designated comfort-zones as is required by the ethical standards of research.

Although a number of participants requested interview material and stories be deleted, there was no attempt to coerce or convince them to change their minds. Regrettably some very powerful data was deleted, but everyone’s rights and values were maintained.

1.9 Evaluation

Although not research aimed at an evaluation, inevitably, the questioning includes a minor evaluative element around the ‘Cinderella’ concept (that is, if the sector is becoming mainstream) and if the initiatives introduced by ACE organisations such as MAE have best served the interests of their communities. Also, whether—in order to ensure their own sustainability—the introduction of VET and tertiary-entry courses have debased the value and efficacy of their negotiated, truly student-centred delivery. Has Cinderella sold out on her aims and ideals by allowing herself to be seduced by the princely, paternalistic institutions with their expensive resources and imposing bureaucracies?

As ACE programs close and experienced staff resign to accept higher salaries and improved work conditions in mainstream sectors, knowledge of the sector’s aetiology, formative values and mythologies are lost.

In documenting an ACE journey from its origins based in charitable intentions towards programs weighted with under-funded vocational, competency-based courses, it is important to acknowledge one final, almost forgotten factor. The following facts were discovered as part of this research, but do not appear to be recorded in any of the published data for OTTE, ACFE or from the former State
Training board. Until 1988, ACE providers were known as “TAFE Community Providers”, and organisations such as MAE (as CAL) were required to submit statistics to the Northern Metropolitan Board of TAFE, under the ‘TAFE Annual Statistical Collection’ (*TAFE Board circular*, 1984). In 1988, CAL, and other ACE providers, received—and successfully submitted—the “Application for Registration as a TAFE Provider” in category C (Lund, 1984, p. 1). It is only 8 years since ACFE-funded ACE organisations were invited to advertise as TAFEs, using both the ‘TAFE, of course’ slogan and fish swimming against the current logo. (Sussex, 1998)

Constantly shifting along a continuum between charitableness, being a quasi-TAFE and being acknowledged as an autonomous fourth educational sector, losing its history was typical of the essential nature of ACE. Its chameleon qualities both ensured its sustainability and kept it poised on the periphery of legitimised educational departments. With continued reductions in funding from its primary funding source, whether or not its communities can keep programs viable was one of the most constantly expressed fears by the participants of this research.

### 1.10 Outline of the Thesis

This research originated from a number of broad topics around questions which developed from both general conversations within the sector relating to changes which many stakeholders felt have occurred to ACE, and from ideas suggested over a long period of time by conference speakers and project workers who attempted to grapple with defining ACE, studying the student-participants and discussing pedagogical issues around teaching adults in a community setting.

Using general questions such as ‘Is ACE becoming TAFE?’, ‘Who uses ACE and why?’ and ‘What are some of the common defining characteristics of ACE
The Values that You Hold

1.10.1 Parts

Although not formally broken into sections, there are four parts to this study, and nine chapters. The first part is comprised of Chapters 1 to 3 which introduces the research and the literature review and the methods used to complete the research. The second part—which is covered by Chapters 4 and 5—relates to the MAE case study as the ACE organisation being used to complete an historical educational examination of development and change, beginning with an overview of the first ten years of the historical development and a benchmark against which the following ten years of ‘change’ could be researched. The third part, which is comprised of Chapters 6 and 7, contains a descriptive analysis of the materials gained from the 18 interviewees, both encompassing the nature of their individual involvement, and their perceptions of any changes which had occurred both at MAE and in their own lives through their involvement in ACE. The fourth part contains the findings and propositions in Chapter 8, with Chapter 9 as a conclusion.

1.10.2 Synopsis of Chapters

The four parts were divided into nine chapters.

Chapter 1

This first chapter introduces the research questions and general areas under investigation, the historical and local backgrounds, and then describes how the research is significant and original, its difficulties, transferability, and the outline.

Chapter 2

This chapter includes a review of the literature used to research and support the developing questions and emerging propositions, and describes primary and
secondary documents as pre-existing literature within historical research methodology. It introduces the concepts raised by many of these documents which can be considered to have influenced the writing of the study, and provided a continuum of learning and practice upon which the ACE of 2005 is founded.

Chapter 3

The research methodologies are described and justified in this chapter, detailing how a triangulation of methods was drawn from qualitative analysis and substantiated by some quantitative research. It then describes the *bricolage* of methods used, and details how selected aspects of grounded research methodology were used to isolate concepts and categories which led to a number of findings and propositions.

Chapter 4

The chapter commences with the results of a survey which was distributed to people from both the Moreland organisation, four other Northern Metropolitan ACE centres and some affiliates such as regional staff and librarians. This was to provide the study with a general context and record some preliminary ideas and opinions of stakeholders both within and beyond MAE as well as to act as an introduction to the idea of being interviewed. This chapter gives a detailed description of the numbers and characteristics of the participants, all of whom identified themselves on the form. Although most of the data was drawn from closed questions, there was a place for comment, and the opportunity to choose to select areas of interest and ignore others.

It then introduces the case study of MAE by documenting its aetiology from a small meeting of interested participants drawn together in Coburg Library in the early nineteen eighties. It describes the early years of the organisation then records the participants, funding and management of 1994 to establish a point of comparison for the sector ten years later. This section relies heavily on the primary references of the
organisation including significant reports and statistical data and relevant policies and projects.

**Chapter 5**

This chapter commences with the implementation of two programs funded in 1999—the LearnLinks and Diploma of Further Education projects to demonstrate the difference between their ‘top down’ introduction to MAE and the ‘bottom up’ development of the program itself which had been demonstrated in Chapter 4. This was to compare the effects and sustainability of the more recent means of commencing programs. It includes a series of matrices demonstrating brief case studies from MAE’s Diploma to question if the Diploma course was both the means by which ACE has become like a TAFE, or by which it has resisted changing its core values.

The chapter then documents the MAE of 2004 to create the second benchmark of characteristics which it uses for comparison with the 1994 data described in Chapter 4.

**Chapter 6**

This chapter documents the results of the preliminary data of the eighteen interviews held to gain opinions on ACE, and to gain an insight into the people who engage in an ACE organisation. It describes how and why the interviews were held and the intention to give a ‘voice’ to the participants, many of whom had been long-term participants in the sector.

The chapter detects some of the recurring themes of the interviews which are grouped into four main dimensions: Business, Education, People and Community. It then begins the descriptive analysis of the data in relation to the external pressures to change which were clearly identified by interviewees in relation to business and
education. These changes were perceived by interviewees—and substantiated by survey respondents—as being applied by political demands and due to decrees by funding bodies—particularly as a result of Ministerial Statements. The implementation of business practices and accredited training provide the main issues discussed by participants.

**Chapter 7**

Beginning with a description of the people, their relationships and a number of common characteristics shared by this very diverse group of interviewees, the chapter then examines the attachments of participants to MAE and their local communities. Separating the issues from those of Business and Education described in Chapter 6, Chapter 7 describes the repetition of interviewees’ concerns about stress created by trying to maintain their goals and core values through a number of grouped themes identified as People and Community. In trying to resist transforming their organisation, they create a strong internal pressure to resist change. Combined with the pressures described in the former chapter, the organisation is shown as being under stress largely due to concerns about unsustainability due to funding cuts.

**Chapter 8**

This chapter contains the findings of the data drawn from the preceding organisational and individual case studies. It reconsiders some of the pre-existing literature to ensure a triangulation of data was part of the analysis. The discussion then details the more conceptual propositions to emerge during the data analysis which is centred within the themes, aspects and dimensions from which they emerged.
A set of findings are examined to create a picture of the reasons for change in the sector, the organisation and in people’s lives. These findings are grouped into three types: sectoral, organisational and individual.

The chapter concludes with suggestions for one explanation of why participants choose to attend ACE organisations over the other sectors, and proposes psychological reasons for why many organisations such as MAE, have—until 2006—often been able to avoid closure.

**Chapter 9**

The final chapter is the conclusion which encapsulates the outcomes of the research and offers a number of concluding statements about ACE, inferring its future from its existing status and proposing answers to the questions of change and sustainability in the face of reduced funding.

The chapter concludes with a short personal statement and description of the impact of ACE on the life of one MAE student.
2. LITERATURE

“I honestly believe there are careers tied up with this. There are people who’ve spent years and years putting together curriculum documents and competencies and whatever. … If the funding gets tighter and tighter like it is. People are going to walk away from it. And say ‘OK. We will offer fee for service courses. And we’ll do what the hell we like’.” Gladys

Like any research, this study built on the historical development of its subject and the research which had previously been conducted into informal and formal learning. It acknowledges not only the existing body of related work from local practitioners, but also the influences of many cultures and affiliated concepts from around the globe.

This chapter presents a review of existing research on the subject of adult community education. Although there was a comprehensive body of research in English-speaking countries on various types of adult education, much of it was parallel rather than providing a base for Australian—and specifically the Victorian—research which related to the community sector. The national or regional differences which became apparent when researching commonalities and influences, clearly demonstrated the lack of meaningful practitioner’s research identified by Sanguinetti in 1994, plus Schofield and Praetz (1997) which was directly applicable to this case study of a community-based adult education organisation which, in turn, has been largely presented from the perspective of the participants in the sector.

For the purpose of providing a point of departure for the case study research on an urban metropolitan community program, only a small amount of documentation was discovered to exist, reinforcing the need for more research into the sector. Like all research, this work relied on an existing body of work, however, while a number of relevant theses and projects are presented in the review, this research can claim originality because of its emphasis not only on an under-researched type of
educational sector, but also because it attempted to articulate what community education meant to its stakeholders, and how it differed from more mainstream educational organisations.

Box 2.1: Tertiary Perceptions of ACE

“It needs to promote itself in academic terms. Never met anyone in a Uni or TAFE yet who believes an ACE organisation can be a bona fide RTO.”
Jules, lines: 155-157

“I mean I’m aware that from my previous experiences that people don’t understand it and don’t know of it, and they’re the people that should know. Let me give you examples. The university registrars, when I was a member of that group, did not know of the ACE sector. Nor did they recognize it as an admissions pathway. But they did recognize specific private providers and specific TAFE institutes.”
Mike, lines: 337-341

For the sake of this study, the nearest comparable existing research on the ACE sector was predominantly divided into three main areas which were spread over a large number of topics related to forms of adult education. Firstly, there was the research completed in other English-speaking countries such as Britain, Canada and the USA, some of which was in turn influenced by European movements. Secondly, there was the national research, predominantly undertaken in the form of government-funded projects, especially those by ‘NCVER’—the National Centre for Vocational Education Research—and some of which was private or in the form of academic reports. Thirdly, there was the research conducted specifically in relation to the state of Victoria, usually funded by and undertaken for either the Office of Training and Tertiary Education (currently OTTE) and Adult Community and Further Education Board, or other government or educational institutions.
These three geographic divisions offered a framework for undertaking searches for related topics through a range of synonymous key-words. The resultant research thus addressed the complexity of the multitude of nomenclature which is a problem faced by any researcher in the adult education field. Articles and documents also related to other, allied areas such as the educational needs of seniors, disability groups, new migrants or youth. This other literature also included the main concepts which underpin this research such as: the writings of Pablo Freire, lifelong learning and the transformative phenomenon (Merizirow, 1978, 1991, 1997) which may result from adults ‘burning to learn’. Underpinning the work with the respondents and interviewees was always an awareness of the analytical psychology of Carl Jung, especially in relation to his typology which can assist in clarifying aspects of personality which seem to account for some people’s continued connection in the ACE sector (Jung, 1954, undated).

2.1 Other English-Speaking Countries

Although this research has touched on a number of different countries of origin, other similar developments occurred in those countries where English was the first language of the populations largely because of the shared Anglo-Celtic origins of the early migrants.

2.1.1 USA and the Kellogg Project

The adult education sector in the USA has been comprehensively documented as part of the ‘Kellogg Project’ undertaken by the University of Syracuse with funding by the Kellogg Foundation of Michigan in the early 1980s. The project ran between from September 1, 1986 to 31 August, 1993 (Hiemstra, 2003), although it has since remained an active collection point conducted by Syracuse University. The
aim of the project was to collect “the world’s largest compilation of English language materials on adult education” (Hiemstra, 2003) where all historical and research materials relating to adult education were intended to be archived, and a large percentage lodged online for global referencing.

Although this enormous collection of material primarily related to USA rather than all English-speaking data, it contained research conducted by the former Adult Education Association of the USA, the American Association for Adult Education and the Department of Adult Education of the National Education Association, with which it merged in 1951 (Hiemstra, 2002a, 2003).

Although many of the articles archived or submitted more recently related directly to adult education—as distinct from adult community education—a large number pointed to a direct intersection between two topics: workers’ education and general adult education. One of the main differences often perceived within this duality was the nature of control. This proposition was based on whether workers possessed any control over their education, as distinct from adult education where the participants were recipients with some input into their learning. This difference can be interpreted as dual continuums: degree of choice and amount of propaganda which remained thematic in many of the articles reviewed by the project (Rohfeld, 1989).

Writers such as Jonathon Bloom (Bloom, 1989) however, claimed that workers’ education in North America was in direct opposition to adult education, a proposal he attributed to class differences. While many researchers supported Bloom’s contention (Cremin, 1976; Keane, 1989), Hiemstra’s definitive work in 1976 in the field quite clearly separated the sector into sub-categories, all encompassed under the umbrella of adult education simply because whatever the aetiology of the teaching and
learning, it involved adults in some form of education, often with a shared pedagogical basis (Hiemstra, 1976, 2002b).

However, in the USA, the post-eighties division of adult education (in the post-secondary, non-compulsory sense) had become divided into the community college movement ("Community Colleges Past to Present," 2004) and the adult education field. These can be roughly equated to the TAFE and ACE divisions in the Victorian education divisions, in that the community colleges had a more mainstream, vocationally-focussed function, while adult education encompassed a range of attributes largely dictated by participators and funding bodies.

Adult education in the U.S.A. also relied on a number of other formative influences. Stubblefield contended that Americans were made receptive to the idea of adult education by immigration of the Danish Folk High School movement (Stubblefield, 1989). This movement developed from the ideology of the Lutheran pastor Nikolai Frederik Grundtvig (1783-1872) whose aim was to prepare Danish peasants for suffrage and to build self-esteem after the demoralising military losses of the 1860s. Although Americans did not accept the cultural limitations of the Grundtvigian Folk Schools which commenced in 1870, Stubblefield maintained that the progressive educational tradition it demonstrated had a formative influence, along with the English and other European models of adult education introduced by immigrants. These influences were possibly integrated into Australian education at some stage, especially given the comments made by Mike, one of the interview participants for this research.
Box 2.2: European Model in ACE

“Well, I actually learnt about what was called the *elderhostels* in 1975. And that fascinated. Because I was the mentor for an elderly woman who came back to university. I was nineteen I think, or twenty. She was considerably past retirement. And it was called the Mature Age Entry Scheme. They really meant - they weren’t talking about twenty-one in those days. And it was based on the European *elderhostel* model.”
Mike, lines 650-658

Hiemstra’s 1976 seminal work on adult education in the USA—and its 2002 updated third edition quoted here—in many ways demonstrated parallels with the early development of adult education in Victoria and related directly to lifelong learning. For the purpose of this work, Hiemstra’s work on community education was made relevant through the section which relates to attempts to define the ‘community’ aspect of adult education as distinct from the generic term used by most researchers.

After defining community in terms of its Latin origins (*communis* meaning fellowship or common feelings or relations), Hiemstra proposed dual types of communities rather than the simplistic and broad definition which relied on towns or neighbourhoods as the key definers. He suggested that communities exist by their ability to pull people in relation to others, one vertically, and the other horizontally. The vertical type relied on affiliated relationships away from geographical locations, for example as sporting club members, people may travel widely to participate. The horizontal related to a pulling within the geographical location—usually within a short distance from the residence and often with different groupings of friends and relations (Hiemstra, 2002b). This horizontal interaction Hiemstra equated to a bonded community where adult community learning was most likely to be in effect.
For the purpose of this research, Hiemstra’s delineation of the horizontal ‘pull’ which added the ‘community’ to adult education was an accepted concept. Even initial pre-reading on the composition of MAE’s statistical data clearly, and sometimes unexpectedly, demonstrated a high correlation of local people who use the service, who frequently introduced other family members and remained in the organisation after their courses were completed, undertaking multiple roles as volunteers, committee members or enrolling in other courses.

2.1.2 Canada

Although the Grundtvigian schools did not flourish in Canada, there was also an attempt to implement an adult schooling system in Alberta in 1876 (Stubblefield, 1989). However, the Canadian adult education movement’s strongest thrust was provided by the formation of the People’s Forum in Winnipeg in 1910 which contained a complex group of workers engaged in social gospel and work activities, aimed at creating a different society (Welton, 1987). This group was comprised of Christian socialist-pacifists, radical feminists and anti-capitalists holding Sunday meetings in local theatres and publishing their lectures for general access in the workers’ papers. Although the forum disbanded in 1917, its educational activities continued, rejecting the public educational system as bourgeois. Welton maintained that the defeat of the general strike led to the formation of the Labour College of Winnipeg which was soon followed by a similar opening in Nova Scotia by radical coal miners interested in workers' education (Welton, 1986). Although the workers planned for a permanent provincial Labour College, they were not successful until St. Francis Xavier University provided educational services for workers in the late 1920s and 1930s (Welton, 1987). Again, in Canada, there was this distinct similarity to the USA in the development of adult education although the focus was slightly skewed
toward Christian humanism through Catholicism rather than Protestantism, and more heavily influenced by the actions of socialist workers.

2.1.3 Great Britain

While Stubblefield’s contentions are not directly applicable to adult education in Australia, they can be seen as transferable in relation to immigration and the strong influence of Christian humanism on the nascent adult education movement in Australia. As was briefly documented in the Introduction, Australia’s adult education origins were directly influenced when imported by British migrants, whose adult education movement can also be traced to the various branches of Protestantism. The literature which demonstrates the development of the adult education sector in Australia is largely reliant on the research which provides a base for this study (Come In Cinderella: The Emergence of Adult and Community Education, 1991), (Lance, 1994; Whitelock, 1974).

The development of adult education in Great Britain has been well documented by a number of researchers; however, there was some confusion because of the multiplicity of both terminology and organisations which represented what in Victoria is known as ACE. ‘Informal Learning and Lifelong Learning’ comprise one element of the sector, the work of which was amply documented by the non-profit organisation known as ‘Infed’ (Informal Learning and Further Education) as distinct from the adult education largely funded by the Department of further Education and Employment (DfEE) which was almost equivalent to the Victorian Division of Education’s post-secondary and further education department (ACFE). The Infed organisation proposed a range of very diffuse and obscure defining qualities for informal education largely around the concepts of exchanged information and dialogue (Smith, 1997). Smith divided the concepts into two areas: the lifelong
learning people learn everyday and non-formal education which was an organised educational activity outside of the mainstream. He further defined community education as being very close to the view of informal education (Smith, 1997) where the emphasis was on working within a defined community—whereas informal workers may not experience this restriction, for example, where a social worker or nurse worked within a household. His preference for the term informal education indicated inclusion of the kind of all-encompassing social and familial dialogues during which information was exchanged.

However, Great Britain also had a long history of adult education which did not extend to Smith’s looser, diffuse version of learning.

Some researchers have recorded definitive texts on the development of the British adult education movement, emphasising links with the nineteenth century mechanics’ institutes within political and historical contexts (Dobbs, 1919) (Fieldhouse & Associates, 1996). J. F. C. Harrison placed the British movement within a wider context of democratic development, proposing that the development of literacy and self-improvement were middle-class initiatives originally implemented by such industrialists as Robert Owen—who also travelled to Indiana in the USA to establish the Community of Equality at New Harmony in 1824-1828 and can be seen as one of the formative influences there (Harrison, 1961). This contention was validated by the popular literature of the time, for example in the novels of the best-selling female novelist of the period, Ellen Wood. Her melodramatic fiction such as A Life’s Secret (Wood, undated--1st printed 1867), Mildred Arkell (Wood, undated--1st printed 1870) and Danesbury House (Wood, undated--1st printed 1867) depict lower-middle-class factory owners—whom she claimed to have modelled on her own glove-maker father—to be absorbed in
instigating working mens’ institutes and model workers’ cottages to reduce drunkenness, poverty and increase literacy with a view to universal suffrage.

T. Kelly, in his *A history of adult education in Great Britain* claimed adult education predated the Owenites as it had commenced in the middle ages in Britain when it was based on then concepts of salvation and the development of Puritanism and science. His contention that learning was linked to religion was reinforced by other early researchers who related learning to spirituality, and followed its development through nineteenth century church-going to current educational practices and programs which take place within religious institutions (Yeaxlee, 1925).

Other researchers, such as Mary Stuart and Alistair Thomson who edited a series of twelve papers relating to marginalised groups such as seniors, refugees, women, and gays, largely proposed the contention that adult education was primarily about inclusion (Stuart & Thomson, 1995). This assertion was also often repeated in Australian research such as the work on social capital which provided support for the stakeholder profiles in Chapters 6 and 7 of this work (Golding, Davies, & Volkoff, 2001). Stuart and Thomson’s articles, however, provided some of the strongest differences between the British further and community education sector and the Australian in that they denoted participants as ‘other’, thereby reinforcing their diversity rather than taking the inclusive approach proposed by ACE programs and their funding bodies (Golding et al., 2001).

Other British research which has had an impact on the development of the sector includes *Serving communities* (Brook, 2000), which contained documentation on adult education thematically reliant on market-place and economic constraints. Although predominantly relating to English programs, the work also included
references to studies undertaken in the U.S.A, Ireland and Latin America, arguing the proposal that community adult education was driven by economic determinants either imposed by governments or governmental policies or driven by participant needs for employment.

This relationship between labour and adult education which provided a formative focus in the Canadian sector, was also a strong link to British studies either in harmony with, or opposition to, socialist and Christian humanist movements comprehensively researched by the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) in 1998. This paper endorsed a culture of lifelong learning which emphasised valuing learning “for its own sake as well as for the equality of opportunity it brings” *(Realising the vision. Second WEA submission to "The Learning Age" Consultation, 1998)*. However, the work also tended toward using the deficit model which had become problematic since the work of Paolo Freire which had continued to impact strongly on the global adult education sector (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

### 2.2 Australia

Although the origins of the adult education movement in Britain, USA and Canada have some commonalities, the differences can be related to other predominant themes such as European immigration and a diversity of social/cultural and socialist influences. For the purpose of this study, these origins can be seen as probable causes and influences on the equivalent Australian sector.

#### 2.2.1 Government Reports

In Australia in the early nineteen-nineties, a number of national reports introduced change of perspectives to the educational debate. The 1991 Finn Report recommended the identification of employment-related competencies which all
young people needed in order to engage in employment (Finn, 1991). This was followed by the 1992 by the Carmichael report recommending links to industries (Carmichael, 1992), then the Mayer report which proposed a number of key competencies after consultation with school, industries and the community, modelled largely on the British General National Vocational Qualifications framework and the 1991 ‘America 2000’ proposal of three foundation areas with five underpinning competencies.

The Mayer report was accepted by the Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training (MOVEET) (Mayer, 1992). Although now erroneously accepted—and reported—as the seven Mayer key competencies, ("The history and development of key competencies," 2001), originally the number was proposed as eight, with ‘appreciation of culture’ being dropped from the eventual number, except in relation to the accredited Victorian Certificate of General Education for Adults, where the competency-based stream named the General Curriculum Option retained the eighth (ACFEB, 1995). Although its aetiology has become obscured historically, this eighth competency remained an integral part of the revised Victorian 2003 CGEA, and its intention diminished to the current concepts of ‘managing diversity’ espoused in many organisations’ policy documents.

In 1991, the first of the two reports which were to be come known as the ‘Cinderella’ Reports were presented to the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training. This report stated that adult community education was commenced by “visionaries” (Come In Cinderella: The Emergence of Adult and Community Education, 1991) who set up alternates to mainstream education in mechanic’s institutes, libraries and other venues due to the demand of the six out of every ten adult Australians who access adult education every year (p.
The Values that You Hold

It also concluded that these visionaries were from the Workers Educational Association, transplanted from Britain just before the First World War.

Unfortunately, this contention was not upheld by the existence of a plethora of pre-existing adult educational programs and institutes, such as the Working Men’s College established by Frances Ormond and others in Melbourne during the nineteenth century (Ling, 1984) (Whitelock, 1974).

The initial Cinderella report aimed at legitimising adult education by reiterating its position as the fourth educational sector (pp. 2, 129) and referred to it as being defined by its participants. It contended that ACE was characterised by the following features: aiming to promote lifelong learning in a way not achieved by mainstream education, being user-pays and flexible, having open entry and exists, and being non-compulsory with a strong emphasis on compensatory or second-chance engagement. Although the report acceded that these qualities could be available in other educational sectors, it was only in the area of adult community education that these all appeared. (*Come In Cinderella: The Emergence of Adult and Community Education*, 1991)

However, the ‘MOVEET’ National Policy on Adult Community Education contended that the term ACE actually referred to eight variations across Australia: adult community education; adult education in the community; adult, community and further education; community owned and managed adult education; community-based education; and community adult education. It also listed other educational practices and environments such as in prisons, workplaces, welfare and industry as obscuring any simple defining quality (*National Policy: ACE, Hobart*, 1993). This MOVEET report endorsed the recommendations of the Cinderella report by establishing a Commonwealth office known as the Department of Employment,
Education and Training (DEET) which was specifically responsible for development of national policy on ACE, and developed targets for—and allocated resources to—states and territories (National Policy: ACE, Hobart, 1993).

The policies proposed by MOVEET can be considered to underpin the 1994 ACE which this research proposes as a main point of commencement. For the purpose of this work, which queries the degree and type of changes to have occurred in the sector, there was a pronounced similarity to the Outcomes and Strategies proposed by the 2004 Ministerial Statement on ACE (Kosky, 2004).

Of the proposed outcomes and strategies of the 1973 MOVEET recommendations, many recurred in the Cinderella report and have been repeated in the 2003 and 2004 Ministerial Statements made by Victoria’s Minister for Education and Training, witnessing the lack of progress made in over 20 years to legitimize the sector, and failing to provide it with resources and improved working conditions for ACE staff. Examples are found in a number of documents (National Policy: ACE, Hobart, 1993), Ministerial reports (Kosky, 2004) and reaffirmed by meetings with the state Minister for education (ACEVic, 2006).

Committed to the concept of lifelong learning based on the first Global Conference on lifelong learning held in Rome in 1992, the 1996 Key Issues report from the National Board of Employment, Education and Training made three recommendations (in brief). Firstly, that state and federal ministers should co-operate to evaluate and plan for educational assessment especially in senior secondary and competency-based VET and secondly, that RPL be implemented for all sectors, and thirdly, that all sectors’ teachers needed to be trained in technology and all people to have equal access (Lifelong learning: Key issues, 1996).
This report was co-produced with an ACE working party whose consultations concluded with recommendations that the current focus of VET be broadened to include generic social survival skills. It also recommended that a ‘learning community’, with the aim of informing, offering access to flexible learning options and open learning be integral. While interim advice to the mainstream sectors included four issues to be addressed: assessment, delivery, social dimensions and lifelong learning opportunities, the ACE working party added an additional three issues: curriculum, RPL and technology (Lifelong learning: Key issues, 1996).

The 1996 report reiterated the comprehensive set of papers encompassed by the Australian Association of Adult Education document whose analysis of ABS demographics, predictions of migration, review of the learning communities in Peru and reports on the 1972 UNESCO conference in Paris and the Learning Society movement in Ontario (Lifelong Education: Conditions, Needs, Resources. Volume 1, 1973) are as pertinent in 2004 and 2005, as thirty years previously. Even the introductory address by the Hon Kim Beazley (senior) as Minister for Education predicted and encapsulated many reports and statements made between 1994 and 2004 in relation to technology, diversity, education for life and living, short courses, workplace training, return to education at all stages of life, access and equity, plus flexible entry (Beazley, 1973).

1.2.1.1 National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Nationally, the NCVER provided the most relevant and current research material for all educational sectors. For the purpose of this work, a number of definitive pieces of NCVER research are presented chronologically because of their status impacting on ACE or its stakeholders.
One of the most detailed studies on ACE which was completed for NCVER was the 2001 report by J. Saunders in relation to the linkages between ACE provision of vocational education and training, and mainstream delivery. Unfortunately, for the purposes of this research, this comprehensive report compared provision in NSW and South Australia and not Victoria. However, because some provision was based on ANTA funding, some of the resultant data can be assumed to be transferable within Australia, and applicable to Victoria.

One of the report’s main findings was that the provision in NSW was more vocationally oriented than in SA, reaffirming a contention expressed in the introduction of this work that although there are commonalities and a degree of transferability, ACE in Victoria also has differences to the other states, demonstrated by the CGEA, the development of Bradshaw’s framework, and differences between senior secondary and alternate entry certificates accredited through VCAA and ACFE.

The main interest in the Saunders report in relation to this research, however, was in its attempts to define and encapsulate the characteristics of the sector, which it maintains are found in the people who choose to study in ACE, and their reasons for studying which are centred around flexibility, its importance for adults who have had negative schooling experience and its relevance as a “springboard” from which participants could enter other courses (Saunders, 2001).

Alternatively, Saunders also identified some aspects of ACE delivery which should be of concern to the sector, such as the low level of knowledge about their delivery of training packages by Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABs) and employers (Saunders, 2001).
As a general recommendation, Saunders contended that the marketing done in relation to the ACE sector was not adequate and suggested that it needed considerable promotion through: improving information and access to that information, promoting ACE as an entity, improving ACE staff members’ knowledge and linkages with mainstream VET and the reverse, and promoting credit transfer between sectors (Saunders, 2001).

The relevance of the Saunders report for this research lay in its emphasis on the anonymity of ACE as a sector, and its inability to promote itself, largely—and somewhat ironically—because of the factor which was also described by Saunders as its main strength; its flexibility, which gave it a chameleon-like quality difficult to promote.

One of the most comprehensive attempts to define the ACE sector post-2000, was also published in 2001. It was the review of ACE research completed by Golding, Davies and Volkov, which referred to the way adult learner experiences in the community context creates an undeniable connection for learners which encapsulates VET, informal and formal lifelong learning for recreation and pleasure (Golding et al., 2001). Golding, Davies and Volkoff’s comprehensive review of ACE research completed during the 1991-2001 period, provided any ACE researcher with an excellent overview of documentation undertaken during that period; however, as the project was funded by ANTA and undertaken by a team of tertiary academics, it did not offer the recommended participatory research (Sanguinetti, 1994). Nor was it “undertaken by reflective practitioners, those who are within adult education, who understand and share its values, who build up adult education within the community” which Praetz contended was essential to a thorough understanding of the research necessary to legitimise the sector (Praetz, 1997).
2.2.2 Other Researchers

This research on a specific case study within the Victorian ACE sector must be seen as being influenced by the precepts of lifelong learning exponents, and the definitive work on the concept which was documented in 1996. The writers of *Lifelong Learning* contend that the main influence on the concept was the first global conference on lifelong leaning in Rome in 1994 where they quote an unnamed American as saying that lifelong learning is the culmination of work such as his own over 40 years within education. (Longworth & Davies, 1996). After a complex tracing of its aetiology and scope, they offered a definition of lifelong learning which related a wide range of terms and concepts such as: empowerment, stimulation, knowledge, values, potential, confidence, creativity and role in different environments.

Longworth and Davies’ interpretation was one of the few which included both the learner and the learning within the tripartite theoretical aspect of lifelong learning, thus incorporating the pedagogy, both mainstream and alternate educational systems, plus the social and psychological imperatives which drive the learning.

In New South Wales in 1995, David G. Beckett completed a thesis which extended the basic concepts of lifelong learning specifically into the field of adult education by offering a philosophical argument that adult educators see themselves as “the agents of the integration” of adults learning from their own experiences, and the value of education—which he referred to as the authenticity and integrity aspects of the sector (Beckett, 1995). Beckett’s thesis tended to apply to a range of adult education field such as nursing, literacy and corporate training, (p.13 and p.237) and is not specifically community-based, concentrating on articulating concepts related to adult learning, which he contended created a point of tension when translated into
adult education. This tension he related to concepts of professionalism which entered the sector—largely during the 1990s. This tension he ascribed to education’s representation of a body of ideals and the optimism about achieving those ideals within the ‘massive’ claims of social phenomena related to class, ethnicity and gender (p. 2). This tension he contended extended to the duality of the educationally significant and the experientially authenticated because of the perspective brought to the classroom by adults. This intrusion of adult experience into the educational context generated a strong sense of the ownership of the experiences of learning. Beckett hypothesized a wide range of theoretical propositions around the creation of learning and education perspectives which effectively argued against the simplistic concept of lifelong learning as proposed by proponents of the concept—such as Longworth and Davies—preferring terms such as ‘recurrent’, ‘continuing’ or ‘extension’ based on the belief that the term lifelong is a ‘maximalist’ (p. 9) definition which failed to distinguish education from learning or from life itself.

Beckett contended that what distinguished adult education from other educational learning was the fusion between experience and selfhood (p. 11) organised in such a way that it encompassed ideals, purposes, goals or outcomes, with a strong emphasis on social injustices—a contention which fitted comfortably within this research into MAE stakeholders.

Where this study diverged from Beckett’s suppositions was by placing the emphasis on the participants and not the pedagogy or theoretical philosophies underpinning adult education, nor on the semantics and implications of terminology such as the use of ‘lifelong learning’ and other concepts. However, as one of the few theses relating to adult education, Beckett’s work needs to be acknowledged.
Included in the review of research by Golding, Davies and Volkoff in 2001, was a second section which was based around the research question “Who participates in ACE?” (Golding et al., 2001). This section reiterated the contention of an earlier study completed in 1996 that ACE outcomes and participation are difficult to measure (Schofield & Dryen, 1996).

The statistical mapping reported by Borthwick in 2001 quoted figures from a national data collection in 1998, which reported that 582,000 adults participated in ACE, estimating that 3% of the adult population accessed ACE in that year (Borthwick, 2001). Although these figures were later revised to 591,550 participants, their accuracy was identified in Golding et al.’s report which contented that it represented only those figures reported on the national database (Golding et al., 2001). ACE practitioners may not have reported a large percentage of their classes or participants because over-delivery of student contact hours could have implied that the sector was capable of delivering at a cheaper rate, leading to loss of funding.

This reliance on reporting “potential and actual” outcomes (Clemans, Hartley, & Macrae, 2003) was discussed at some detail in the ACE Outcomes report which referred to the “tangle of many outcomes in a single adult education activity”(Clemans et al., 2003). While a single individual was reported against a single outcome (accredited or non-accredited)—such as occurred in the Teese report of 1998—this report reiterated the sector’s commitment to a holistic approach toward individuals where three domains of individual activity related to Delors four pillars of learning. This was achieved by creating a full individual life through the private domain of family, friendships and personal interests, the public domain—citizenship, community participation, debate and action, and the work domain—for both paid and unpaid workers (Clemans et al., 2003).
This report was completed by researchers engaged in ACE, which is reflected in the breadth of knowledge of the minutiae of the details included, such as, for example, where they maintain “outcomes are commonly said to be particular to each individual” (Clemans et al., 2003), and therefore unable to be accurately reflected in simple, statistical reporting. When reporting two ACE ‘stories’ of participants’ pathways, the researchers asked “who could tabulate them neatly and easily for the purposes of data collection?” (Clemans et al., 2003). This reflected a recurring problem for a sector accustomed to reporting success by recounts and narratives of cases, being expected to submit statistical data without additional notes.

Outcomes reported by Clemans et al., were more aligned to some form of change or personal transformation, and the study reiterated the work of Bradshaw (Bradshaw, 1997) through the recognition of a multiplicity of interconnected outcomes. This recognition of multiple outcomes endorsed an aspect of this research where the key informants constantly reiterated the double, triple and quadruple involvements they maintained with their ACE centres.

Although addressing each and every one of the national research documents which had influenced ACE, those included here were subjectively selected from a wide variety of sources in the belief that they have impacted most strongly on this research. This selection does not imply that many other documents have not been influences on the sector, but are less immediately applicable, such as those by the following: (Clemans & Bradshaw, 1998; Saunders, 2001) (Campbell & Curtin, 1999) and (Crombie, 1996, 1998).
2.3 Victorian

Because the ACFE-funded ACE sector exists in the state of Victoria—as distinct from similar, but different, forms in other states—research completed by local individuals and organisations provide the most relevant body of work for the purpose of this study to use as a point of departure.

2.3.1 Conceptual Framework of Further Education

One of the most significant publications for the Victorian ACE sector was Delia Bradshaw’s Conceptual Framework for Further Education (Bradshaw, 1997) with a revised second addition in 1999, and the subsequent Curriculum Guide (Brack, Bradshaw, Hagston, Hickson, & Hodge, 2000). Although ACE centres had delivered a variety of accredited courses and training packages before its introduction, Bradshaw’s work introduced the first legitimisation of unaccredited courses developed by ACE teachers. The development of a conceptual framework wherein practitioners could incorporate their teaching into the four key principles and eight lifelong learning goals (Bradshaw, 1999) both legitimised the courses in a way not previously achieved by quoting excellent retention and completion rates.

Bradshaw’s four key further education framework principles were multiplicity, connectedness, critical intelligence and transformation. When combined with the four curriculum aspects of educational practices, learning outcomes, recognition outcomes and pathway outcomes, they created a vehicle for pedagogical discussions around the self-esteem building and repetition of life stories by which ACE had become characterised and for which it was often anecdotally derided as ‘warm and fuzzy’.
Bradshaw’s framework had an immediate impact on the Victorian ACFE-funded sector as applicants for funding were asked to refer directly to the Conceptual Framework in their documentation, which, for the first time offered ACE providers the opportunity to legitimise applications for unaccredited delivery in a way which emphasized more than its ‘feel-good’ quality.

For the purposes of this research, Bradshaw can be considered a major influence for three reasons. Firstly, because her framework created a milieu in which ACE was acknowledged as able to develop and accredit its courses. Secondly, Bradshaw undertook a project at MAE producing a booklet *Text, Talk and Tradition*. 

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**Figure 2.1** Further Education Curriculum Design Mode—reproduced from: (Bradshaw, 1997, 1999)
which was a report on inducting senior CALD students into technology classes, and thirdly, in 2004, she also ran a series of ‘appreciating diversity’ workshops as part of Moreland’s pool developmental funding through ACFE. Her influence at Moreland maintained a culture of appreciation for the transformational aspects of education delivered to stakeholders considered very difficult to engage—early school leavers, long and short-term migrants from war-torn and troubled areas and people with a very wide range of health problems and seniors (Clarke, 2002).

2.3.2 Pathways Reports

The Victorian Dip FE course—which was referred to by many of the key informants and interview questions in this study—resulted primarily because of the ‘Teese’ series of influential government reviews and reports which were published during 1997-8. Popularly known as the ‘Teese Reports’ after Professor Richard Teese of Melbourne University, these reports had both national and state-wide significance for the secondary and post-secondary sectors. They also reported on a number of issues which related to tertiary entry and accreditation in the Victorian ACE sector. These reports ranged over the concepts of seamlessness, middle-level training to higher education and the low rates of entry achieved by adults returning to VCE.

One report stated that only one in ten ACE participants were in an accredited course and that 14% of males and 10% of females participated in accredited courses (R. Teese, 1998). Despite the impact these figures were to have on decision-making for ACE, there was no explanation of why only one in ten ACE participants were in an accredited course although there was an implication that the nine were engaged in some kind of less valuable activity. For centres such as MAE, these figures were not an accurate reflection of the organisation (see table below) where over 50% of the Student Contact Hours (SCH) were reported as accredited delivery. (Curlewis, 1999)
The accredited CGEA, VCE, Vocational and 60% of General Preparatory represent accredited hours. ALBE, ESL & 40% Gen Prep were unaccredited for 1998 and 1999 at MAE. Accredited ALBE and ESL, like General Curriculum Options in Computer Studies—were reported as CGEA.

![Graph](image)

**Figure 2.2.** Accredited and unaccredited delivery for 1998 and 1999 (Sericon, 1998) (Sericon, 1999)

The reported low levels of accreditation did not include extended data such as levels of attendance, completion and even pathwaying which were relevant indicators of success at social and personal levels—if not indicative of preparation for employment. Many of the Neighbourhood (Community) houses with low levels of accreditation were extremely successful at drawing alienated and isolated participants into their first encounters with study through the unaccredited and recreational courses which were given little value in this report.

The reports also offered no explanation of what comprised the ‘courses’. If the 14% of males were enrolled in 30 hr accredited units (such as ‘BSZ4098 ‘Train Small Groups’), but the 10% of women were enrolled in the whole of the Certificate
II in Information Technology (200 nominal hours) these comparison of the female and male participation did not reflect successful outcomes.

The second factor related to effectiveness stated that of 11% of ACE students engaged in accredited subjects, less than 29% were still enrolled the next year (13% still in ACE, 11% in TAFE and 5% in a university)—indicating very low rates of transition. These results may also have been dependent on the regional area in which the research was completed. For example, a provider offering transition courses at AQF levels 3 and 4 would expect higher transition rates than a community centre offering only AQF levels at 1 and 2 to a high proportion of recent migrants with low levels of literacy in their first language.

The emphasis of the report was on accreditation, effectively recommending combining accredited and unaccredited delivery, increasing accredited training to reduce the re-circulation of students and create new pathways. It also emphasised that seamlessness should encourage mobility between sectors, while retaining their distinct nature and character (R Teese, 1997) which led to a number of principles and recommendations emphasising: Increased dissemination of information especially prior to course selection, continuance of RPL, ACE inclusion within the VTAC application, the reduction of duplication of services and delivery, persuading Selection Officers to validate the credentials of ACE students over other mature aged applicants due to their preparation for entry into TAFE and universities, and support strategies for disadvantaged ACE students. These recommendations were the basis of the recommendations which led to the development of the Dip FE in Victoria—and are emphasised here because of their relevance for this research.
Teese’s reports were further validated by studies conducted by Richard Curtain which examined both TAFE and Higher Education, reaffirming the problems facing tertiary entry for those seeking alternate entry paths (Curtain, 2000).

The figures reported by Teese, Curtain and the NVCER report relating to cross-sectoral mobility were not isolated to regional, state or even national levels, but followed a global trend. This goal of developing courses aimed at promoting and preparing for tertiary studies through formal accreditation in place of the previous ad hoc mature-aged or special entry. It also encapsulated a number of governmental and global policies to create a range of Alternate Category Entry schemes which were largely tripartite in composition and approach to: Unemployment, Lifelong Learning (especially for Youth, Seniors and Women without qualifications), and Vocational Education and Training.

In 2001, Teese and Watson completed a later NCVER report on data collection within post-compulsory education and training. Although this report concentrated most heavily on mainstream institutions and cross-sectoral mobility, it did make reference to ACE delivery as “a significant provider of education and training” (Teese & Watson, 2001). The report however, claimed it would be premature to include ACE data in a cross-mobility study because of issues with only approximately half of its data being reported. The writers attributed this lack to the participants or administration of the sector, claiming a higher rate or non-responsiveness than for other mainstream sectors. However, this contention again supports the case for ACE to complete its own research, as active participants within the sector may have included a number of explanations for this problem. Firstly, that ACE providers had been instructed not to report any figures above their funded student contact hour (SCH) contractual agreements as such over-delivery implied less
funding was needed. Secondly, that ACE providers had a very high percentage of non-literate and low literacy levels and very high percentages of participants with limited English. Thirdly, forms required to collect data were written by funding bodies and not by advocates of plain English so were obtuse in structure and format. Fourthly, because of the inflexible nature of the multiple AVETMISS statistical databases (11 in 2004) against which ACE in Victoria reported (Hoare, 2001).

Teese and Watson’s contention that “ACE providers do not appreciate the importance of collecting comprehensive data” (R Teese & Watson, 2001) was erroneous as this information had been a compulsory field since electronic statistical reporting was introduced to ACE in 1995 (Sericon Nrolls statistical data 1995-2005). Failure to enter in that field resulted in non-acceptance of the client details page creating an unsuccessful validation error which was rejected by the OTTE website—resulting in non-payment of the next year’s quarterly payment, and failure of the audit process.

An example of the implementation of these pathwaying concepts which became adopted in Victoria was endorsed more widely in a study conducted through the University of London by Penelope M Sewell in 2000. Sewell integrated a range of these concepts to determine if there was an interface between skills acquired outside of education, including personal characteristics and qualities and tutors’ perceptions of lifelong learners. Some of these included the fear of appearing silly, a lack of confidence in academic settings and an awareness that—unlike children—they were able to apply professional knowledge and skills (Sewell, 2000). These factors are frequently those described by participants as one of the major reasons for engaging in ACE with a number of interviewees for this study reaffirmed Sewell’s contentions.
Box 2.3: Support in ACE

“I can tell you from my personal experience with students who have tried TAFE and gave it up. … And she said ‘It was impersonal’. … She was completely ignored. …And the third reason she said, is the embarrassment element of it. Like in a small group in a Community House, they could put up their hand and talk about things. And not feel so self-conscious… I felt if I said the wrong thing people would laugh at me. And I felt I wasn’t good enough. Whereas here I feel comfortable, I feel at ease’. And at all these places nobody is going to say ‘That stupid woman is talking again’.”

Rani, lines: 508-529

“I didn’t know any different, so when I went to ACE I hadn’t gone to sort of any other universities or anything. So I didn’t really know what differences it could be, but one thing I remember is being, it was like, being sort of welcomed into that environment, you know. It’s like somebody having been there with, you know, open arms and, you know, giving you the confidence to come in. So that was really good.”

Ben, lines: 205-210

2.3.3 Lifelong Learners

ACFE publications such as Building communities: ACE, lifelong learning and social capital (Falk, Golding, & Balatti, 2000) also provided a grounding for this work by reinforcing the relevance of ACE in relation to lifelong learning and the essential nature of communities in developing social capital. This work linked not only Bradshaw’s, but also modelled a range of Stake’s collective case studies.

In the research completed by Falk et al, single aspects of ten providers’ “community portraits” (p. v) were documented to demonstrate their relevance for either their geographic locality—both urban and rural—or for their importance for a cultural group, such as Koori or Youth. The researchers were careful to avoid the term case studies, using terms like group portraits and written portraits instead (Falk et al., 2000) to detail a selected aspect of each of the ten providers in order to reach their research conclusions that ACE contributes to the social and economic wellbeing
of individuals and communities by building social capital at both the meso
(organisations, clubs, firms and groups) and micro (personal) levels (Falk et al.,
2000). A fourth conclusion reached referred to the language and literacy studies
provided by ACE as a “vehicle for transformation” (p.80) built on the principles of
Interconnectivity which is defined in terms similar to those used by Bradshaw.
However, as there was no list of references in Falk et al’s work, and Bradshaw was
not footnoted in any of the chapters, this duplication tended to diminish the
importance of the document. Bradshaw’s framework can be considered to have
provided a justification for the researching of these ten portraits and a means by
which their relevance established—particularly as they were all in Victoria where
Bradshaw’s work was developed and had impacted most strongly.

The phenomenon which can be read as underpinning a great many aspects of
the Victorian ACE sector within the concepts of lifelong learning or personal
transformation, had been described anecdotally as ‘Burning to Learn’. This was the
phenomenon which provided a basis for much of the adult education research, and
contributed to the sense of transformation which was a constant refrain behind ACE
research. Although not directly referred to in Australian or Victorian documents as
such, American Ursula Kelly had also called the ‘burning’ of lifelong learning, the
‘schooling desire’ (Kelly, 1997). The phenomenon was a common characteristic of
adult students, many of whom had formerly rejected education. Kelly’s contentions
were based on a multiplicity of disciplines including psychoanalytic insight
(Silverman, 1996) which denoted this desire as an expression of a polarity which was
both culturally promoted and linguistically blocked within an individual. The
significance of Kelly’s theorising in regard to the acquisition of learning had especial
relevance for individuals such as those entering ALBE courses or the Dip FE
(ACFEB, 1999) students, formerly alienated from educational processes but displaying enthusiasm for unstructured, mentored learning.

The Dip FE and CGEA, which can be said to encapsulate Victorian lifelong learning from AQF 1 (introductory) to tertiary entry, their curricula and accreditation, plus the battle for continuation of the Dip FE delivery, personify Kelly’s contentions to a marked degree. When literacies (functional, cultural, progressive and critical) are taught, they propagate a contextually specific society and its set of values. Kelly depicted ‘desire’ in terms of the yearning of the individual to be personally transformed by recognition of these dominant cultures and multiple literacies. The CGEA and the Dip FE that presuppose certain cultural norms, address these issues which are based on the assumption that the individual’s understanding of the hierarchical nature of academic bureaucracies and conquering of a multiplicity of literacies, will lead to transformation.

The learning outcomes propagated within CGEA and Dip FE’s lifelong learning can be grouped into those outlined by Kelly as: functional literacy occurring with the acquisition of workplace skills, and progressive literacy which covered the ideology of personal growth and awareness although often without a sustainable structure. Other literacies included cultural literacy, which was often within elitist, closed and authoritarian bureaucracies where the terminology and processes isolated an adult with a lower level of literacy, and critical literacy, which was a socially transforming knowledge & education which positions students to question (Kelly, 1997).
Table 2.1 **Literacy and the Diploma of Further Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional</td>
<td>Learning to Learn</td>
<td>• Acquisition of writing styles and formats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Endnotes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Bibliographies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional</td>
<td>Technological Skill</td>
<td>• Mastering computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Software packages</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Internet and email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Personal Evaluations</td>
<td>• Skills gap measurements/SWOT analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Keeping charts, diaries, journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Interactions</td>
<td>• Meeting tertiary personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Meeting existing adult tertiary students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mentoring (negotiating/transference etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>Text/Dialogue</td>
<td>• Analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Deconstruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Verbal interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using Kelly’s contentions to examine these outcomes, it is possible to see that the desire for education and subsequent transformation was created through the competing interactions of multiple literacies. Where the concepts of critical literacy or reading the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987) were not incorporated into adult education, the course became another form of instructional training emphasising the technical skills and linguistic codes lacking in transferability.

The Victorian language and literacy teacher and researcher Jill Sanguinetti’s thesis written in 1999, addressed a number of related issues through a poststructuralist, feminist perspective. Sanguinetti’s work was based on the late 70’s work of Freire, which heavily influenced many practitioners and, combined with Marxist ideology, created her personal-is-political self-awareness. She felt able to articulate her own journey as an adult educator through this self-awareness, especially in relation to the impact of competency based training on the ALBE field, particularly in regard to the implementation of the state-accredited CGEA.
Sanguinetti—who was also a researcher on a later document used in this study—explored the way ALBE and ESL teachers practiced and related to the “challenges and dilemmas produced by contradictory historical, theoretical and policy text” shaped by global economies (Sanguinetti, 1999). She used the discursive practices and reflections of three CGEA teachers as key informants to discuss the impact of the CGEA on the field through participatory action research, querying the intersection between progressivism, professionalism and ‘performativity’, to create new ideas of transformation in a teacher’s political, professional, and pedagogical discourses.

As a practitioner, she fulfilled the infrequent role of research by and for the ACE sector, which made her thesis very relevant to the sector although it was not a direct influence on this research because it encapsulates all participants: committee, volunteer, paid staff and student participant in contrast to Sanguinetti’s work which featured the teacher-participant.

2.4 Concluding Comment

Aspects of this work were built on the strong foundation of other peoples’ theories and the ideas which have influenced the thoughts and attitudes that form the research. Influences were undoubtedly built from prior works, creating a strong basis from which to create new and original ways of researching and analysing the resultant data.

Apart from the studies which contributed to the development of the methodology for this research—discussed in Chapter 3—the most influential contributors who provided ideas were: Heimstra (2002, 2003) for his definition of a horizontal community, Bradshaw (1997, 1999) for her input into the state of adult
education in Victoria and Teese (1998) for his influence on the pathways projects which were incorporated into MAE’s program.

This chapter acknowledged that many people created a base from which this research could commence, and recognized the less direct input of many others, acknowledging that they have been formative influences on the current state of ACE in Victoria.
3. METHODOLOGY

“I want to ask you. OK. You collect all this information you’re going to put it in your dissertation. And what happens to the research? ... All this planning and everything is OK, but a touch of sincerity and a sense of purpose and direction is important. That’s my opinion about it.” Rani

This chapter documents the methods used to research the aspects of the ACE sector which are germane to this study, that is, questioning around a number of general topics such as if ACE has changed—through an examination of the MAE organisation, who are the participants involved, and why do they engage in the sector. The methodologies of the research which are detailed in this chapter were selected as the most effective means of eliciting the emerging propositions which arose from analysing the data.

Thus, following this introduction is an explanation of which methods were selected for the study and analysis and why they were selected. Following is a brief synopsis of the five main methods of qualitative research: observation, interviewing, ethnographic fieldwork, discourse analysis and textual analysis (Travers, 2001). The chapter then presents an explanation for the decision to undertake historical educational research through an organisational case study before describing the process and methods used for surveying respondents and for conducting interviews with key informants. Lastly, this chapter then describes how the data was analysed and synthesised, and why that analysis was conducted through a range of matrices suggested by grounded theorists such as Glaser and Miles and Hubermann, using a set of visual diagrams instead of contemporary electronic software.

3.1 Methods

In order to answer the question if the ACE sector is becoming part of the TAFE sector, and enquiring into the characteristics and motivation of its participants, three
means of analysing materials suggested the most effective research methodologies for this work. The first was descriptive qualitative historical educational research which documented the aetiology of MAE from its inaugural meetings in 1982-3. The work then researched the organisation 10 to twelve years later to establish changes in funding, delivery and stakeholders.

By researching the historical formation of MAE, it became apparent that it was instigated by a ‘bottom-up’ process whereby a diverse range of individuals and circumstances met, planned and developed strategies to gain seeding funding. Documenting this development meant researching a very confused conglomerate of papers, photographs and unbound or unfiled materials stored in broken boxes. However, this process became an important means of contrasting one of the primary differences between the early ACE and how more recent processes developed. The following years were examined to determine the existence or degree of change, while the development of the LearnLinks network project and the Dip FE were also researched as historical initiatives to provide a contrast because of their ‘top-down’ funding patterns. Researching the dual means of formation provide one of the greatest demonstrators of change between the early days of ACE and more recent developments.

The second was through a preliminary survey of participants from both MAE and other organisations in the northern-metropolitan region of Melbourne to determine a broader overview of ideas and opinions on change and participation.

Thirdly, there was a series of interviews with MAE participants over two years to demonstrate commonalities and contrasts, and to question any specific attributes of participants in an ACE community.
Although this completed a triangulation of methods, existing literature was examined in Chapter 2 to both confirm the originality of the research and to establish a benchmark of existing theories and practice. Data from the case study of MAE in Chapters 4 and 5 provided an educational historical examination of an organisation. Both to ensure equity of participation and to gain subjective responses and a sense of social cohesion, respondents and interviewees provided a considerable amount of material to the study both in relation to a survey distributed through the wider north-suburban area of Melbourne, and through the series of interviews.

The methodologies used to research this proposal have the following primary purpose: To demonstrate the development of a community-based provider of adult education within the wider context of change through an organisational case study. This was intended to fulfil Stake’s definition of a case study as “both the process of learning about the case and the product of our learning” (Stake, 1994, pp. 76-87). Using Stake’s tripartite classification of case studies as intrinsic, instrumental or collective, the case study of MAE was undertaken within historical research methodology. This was in keeping with criteria detailed by McCulloch and Richardson’s claim that investigating educational settings through historical research is an effective way to “tackle both the theoretical and practical questions that arise” (McCulloch & Richardson, 2000, p. 1). Documenting the development of the sector through a case study approach dictated research using the methodologies which maintained the flexibility to demonstrate both the strengths and weaknesses of the sector.

With the hindsight gained by undertaking historical research, the definitive points of influence could be established. Even at the preliminary stages of this research, a number of questions and ideas became obvious. Firstly, that comments
made by ACE participants about changes to administration, responsibilities and some educational aspects of community organisations suggested that research into the ACE sector which gave participants a forum for opinions would be welcome. Secondly, that existing studies did not seem to capture the intrinsic nature of a complex, apparently ephemeral sector which was characterised by its chameleon-like flexibility. Thirdly, that one of the main means of disseminating information on the sector and justifying its existence was best achieved by story-telling—a means which had traditionally been the most effective way of encouraging adult literacy students to engage in the world of words and empowering ideas. Although often justified as an accountability device called ‘case studies’, ACE story-telling was a recurring feature of the interviews for this study. This undeniably raised questions about: The interviewer’s personal style which may have encouraged the recurrences, all parties’ familiarity with the process as an aspect of adult education, and the psychological drivers which use stories to engage in socially connected dialogue, and to integrate unconscious—or conscious—psychical material as part of the analytical process of psychology.

3.1.2 Grounded Theory

The speed with which themes and early propositions began to develop from multiple sources in the initial planning of this study, indicated that using some of the devices of grounded theory would provide an appropriate methodology to create the framework for this research. This was based on the three basic elements of grounded theory—concepts, categories and hypotheses—initially suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967, pp.140-141) which were later modified by Corbin and Strauss (1990, p. 7) who adapted the third element to ‘propositions’ which they contended involved conceptual relationships more in keeping with grounded theory than the more
quantitative term ‘hypothesis’ which they perceived as measuring relationships.

These elements formed a structure which incorporated the five (unordered) analytic phases of grounded theory building: Research design, data collection, ordering, analysis and literature comparison. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.23). The framework created was enclosed within the four research quality criteria of construction of validity, internal and external validity and reliability, to induct the phenomenon to be researched.

Although this research refers to grounded theory based on Glaser and Strauss’s original 1967 text, because of their diverging opinions other elements have been integrated into the original framework. It can be argued that the grounded theory proposed by Glaser and Strauss has become dual methodologies with Glaser’s 1992 work Basics of grounded theory analysis providing a critique of Strauss and Corbin’s 1990 study, aimed to get “the average researcher back on the correct track to generating grounded theory” (Glaser, 1992, p. 6).

W. Babchuk maintained that although Glaser’s critique of Strauss’s work “may seem petty to readers” (Babchuk, 1997, p. 8), it is essential to an understanding of the current theories of grounded theory as it proposes two distinct variants of that approach.

The major differences, Babchuk maintained, related to Glaser’s concentration on the original practices and principles of the qualitative paradigm which saw the natural emergence of the concepts and insights into the informants with little effort on behalf of the researcher. Strauss however, had increasingly begun to stress the importance of precision, verification, significance and other elements more appropriate to scientific—or quantitative—methods.
Whereas Corbin and Strauss emphasised the use of all three—open, axial and selective—coding processes, “putting data back together in new ways by making connections between categories and sub-categories” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 3-21), Glaser contended that this lead to a rigid approach whereby the researcher may miss the relevance of data and manipulate it into a preconceived framework. Ultimately, Glaser maintained that natural theory would generate and emerge as part of the theory “with abstract wonderment” (Glaser, 1992, p. 22), as distinct from Corbin and Strauss’s contentions which emphasised validation and verification “throughout the course of the research project” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 274).

Corbin and Strauss’s definitions of concepts, categories and propositions (1990, p.7) has been helpful in determining how to describe the methods to be used in this research. Concepts are the basic units of analysis that are potential indictors of phenomena, observed or originating in the raw data of research. For this study, these concepts were initiated through reiteration by MAE and other ACE stakeholders who felt threatened by—or argued about—their perceptions of stasis or change within the sector. Categories are generated by the same process, but when coded, may offer a more abstract form derived from the grouping of concepts. These sub-categories initially developed from the diversity of responses to the survey and interview responses. Propositions (originally hypotheses) indicate conceptual relationships between categories and concepts.

These three basic elements provided the basis from which propositions may emerge with the process represented diagrammatically in Figure 3.1 which demonstrates how this research has integrated both the original elements of grounded theory and Corbin and Strauss’s notions of validation and verification.
In Chapters 6-8 of this study, although the general ideas behind such grounded theorists are used, because an additional level was introduced, the nomenclature was adapted to Themes (the primary unit), Aspects (a reduced number of themes due to integration of similarities), Dimensions (coded and grouped Aspects) and emerged Propositions. These were presented by a range of visually presented figures developed to simplify the description and to organise the data for visual learners. A number of figures and tables—particularly the coding versions—have been removed into a separate book of appendices, both to reduce the size of this work and to demonstrate the intermediary stages of how some outcomes were achieved.
Because of the difficulties inherent in dealing with a range of diverse cultures, language levels and capabilities in the community which comprised MAE, this research used the above chart as a framework while maintaining the flexibility to include a range of alternate methods and philosophies where appropriate. This process of integrating multiple theories and methods was recommended by Pole and Lampard who stated “research design is not merely about the identification of appropriate data-collection techniques for the research but is an aspect of the research process” which incorporates: Literature, a theoretical framework, a designated type of study, relevant research instruments, a data analysis as well as writing and the dissemination of the outputs (Pole & Lampard, 2002, p. 322).

This study drew on Pole and Lampard’s reiteration that research methodologies should be integrated and flexible because social research was about the unknown, causing the planned design to need readjustment. This flexibility reflected what Hammersley and Atkinson called a reflexivity which permits the researcher to integrate both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and to justify the changing dynamics of the research without incorporating loose or unnecessary changes (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). This flexibility also reinforced the use of multiple approaches advocated in many texts on research methodologies (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and reiterated the validity of integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Bryman, 1988, p. 127-156).

These methods of eliciting information for this research have, in part, been formed by Pole and Lampard’s contention that the combined use of surveys and in-depth interviews play complementary roles by providing “patterns of need and perception of need” (2002, p.30). Although often providing apparently contradictory findings, the dual methods elicited relevant conclusions because they both
complemented and challenged each other, especially when reinforced by secondary sources such as official statistics and observations (Pole & Lampard, 2002, p. 322).

Each of the primary and secondary sources of data and methods of collecting them are demonstrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Outline of Research Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research approach</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Methods of collecting data</th>
<th>Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Qualitative</strong></td>
<td>・ MAE business records</td>
<td>・ Notes from files</td>
<td>・ Permission to copy &amp; use data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>・ MAE publications</td>
<td>・ Notes at regional office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>・ ACFE regional office records</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Intrinsic</td>
<td>・ Government Reports &amp; Policies (local, state, federal)</td>
<td>・ Library borrowing (Universities)</td>
<td>・ Borrowing rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>・ ACFEB/ANTA publications</td>
<td>・ ARIS/Language Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>・ Curriculum documents</td>
<td>・ Internet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Instrumental Case Studies</td>
<td>・ Former/present students</td>
<td>・ Interactive interviewing</td>
<td>・ Ethical considerations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>・ Former/present committee</td>
<td>・ Semi-structured interviewing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>・ Former/present ACFE staff</td>
<td>・ Surveys</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>・ Permission forms</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>・ Ethics committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary Quantitative</strong></td>
<td>・ Statistical data-NROLLS</td>
<td>・ Analysis of software applications</td>
<td>・ Ethical considerations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>・ Statistical data-VASS</td>
<td>・ Analysis of LGA publications</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>・ Demographic data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>・ Measurable Outcomes</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Repeated questioning of why to use quantitative data within a qualitative study can be problematic yet dynamic for the researcher as it encourages both constant questioning of the reason for, and the processes of, the study. As Denzin and Lincoln contended, “qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter” (1994, p.2). They advocated a range of strategies (as distinct from approaches) including life stories, interviews, case studies, and historical and visual texts which are incorporated into the quotidian and problematic times of individuals and communities.
Miles and Huberman succinctly validate the use of quantitative data within qualitative research in their description of the three claims of the power of qualitative data as the best strategy for discovery, exploring a new area and developing and testing hypotheses. They also state “qualitative data are useful when one needs to supplement, validate, explain, illuminate, or reinterpret quantitative data gathered from the same setting.” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10).

Drawing together the multiple methodologies created a *bricolage* from a range of methods, tools and techniques. The ‘bricoleur’ or “jack of all trades or kind of professional do-it-yourself person” (Levi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17), used a range of approaches and strategies to examine data in order to infer emergent solutions rather than adhere to a single—possibly rigid—framework.

Although using Glaser and Strauss and then Strauss and Corbin to provide a framework for this research, the integration of a *bricolage* of interpretive perspectives including analytical psychology, tended to give both depth and an increased understanding of the complex nature of the ACE community and its diverse stakeholders. Where feminist thought elucidates a perspective, writers such as Ann Oakley (1981), Mary Eaton (1986) and others are also considered to provide an underpinning as part of this *bricolage*.

### 3.1.3 Methods for Inclusion

Selecting from the most relevant of the five main methods of qualitative research—observation, interviewing, ethnographic fieldwork, discourse analysis and textual analysis (Travers, 2001, p. 2)—and integrating them into the research process beside quantitative data, constructed a complex, holistic approach which appeared the most appropriate given the complexity of the composition of an ACE centre’s
‘community’. These five methods have been used to varying degrees in this research in order to create an empowering voice for the participants.

3.1.3.1 Observation

In keeping with these five methods as detailed by Travers, one of the multiple initiators of this research was prompted by informal observation of ACE participants commenting on change in the sector. This generation of a proposition is in keeping with Glaser and Strauss’s “initial, systematic discovery of the theory from the data of social work” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 3). Jotted comments during initial discussions and the note-taking—the vital memos of grounded theory—often completed during the early period of research while meeting groups in classes, offices and staff-rooms, and the initial discussions which preceded the interviews, formed the basis for the qualitative observation.

Although this was initially influenced by the researcher’s personal style derived from completing diagnostic, formative and summative assessments for initial ACE placement, its importance was established by feminist ethnographers such as Mary Eaton during her work on observing women during alienating court proceedings (Eaton, 1986).

Eaton and other socialist feminists argue from the proposition that men and women are two different species, and so they favour the use of qualitative research methods like observation in cases such as court-rooms, where—for example—a battered women’s inability to adhere to a ‘detached’ manner and “value intellectual perception so highly and emotions so lowly” (Smith, 1987, pp. 71-72) caused her to be disadvantaged.

For this study, observations were a means of recording and noting a range of the emotions and reactions which research adherents of feminist D. Smith (1987)
contended were ways of “exploring the disfunctions between everyday life and administrative accounts of it” (Diamond, 1992, p. 6). These dysfunctions were obvious during observations of changes in behaviour which occur during formal and informal interviewing, and sometimes in a classroom situation which can take the form of a focus group. Where assessment methods are used to gain information to be used for bureaucratic measurements—for example to assess language and literacy level to determine changes to disability payments—the behaviour of the participant or participants can change markedly.

Similarly, during initial conversations with small groups of individuals about this research, there were often noticeable differences in their behaviour when discussing being taped. These observations of difference were documented in informal notes, memos and included as annotations in interview transcripts. Although this differed from the more formal processes such as acting solely as a research-observer, such observation provided an additional perspective and understanding of the behaviour and attitudes of the interviewees.

3.1.3.2 Interviewing

The number of interviewees posed an initial problem because the nature of ACE participants can make exchanges very time-consuming due to low levels of literacy and English language, and, for this study, the diversity of participants (especially in regards to cultures and varying levels of education and esteem) caused additional difficulties. Travers proposed that the number of interviewees used was largely immaterial, as large studies may interview a hundred participants, while “some of the best life-history studies have been based on a series of interviews with one respondent” (Travers, 2001, p. 3). However, for this study, the number was limited by practical considerations. These included the availability of suitable space
to interview in a comfortable, unthreatening yet impersonal space suited to people needing disability facilities, meeting times which suited carers, seniors unwilling to attend after dark, casual employees, students attending classes, and people with health problems. Consideration had to be given to the negotiation of times which did not impact negatively on family expectations such as having to be home in time to cook hot lunches, collect children from school and be home before parents. Keeping in contact with people interested in the interview process while undertaking preliminary research, for example, ‘John’ moved to Queensland and was lost to the study and ‘Jules’ to a regional city although she wanted to continue, and supplied a number of emails.

For these reasons and the amount of support involved, 20 initially became the number which was thought practical yet would give a range of opinions and stories able to be used for comparison and provide a wealth of intrinsic insight into the sector’s participants. However, the eventual number achieved was 18 due to two interviewees canceling and rescheduling meetings until their inclusion became impracticable. Of the 18 ‘Jules’ relocated and ‘Steve’ discussed impersonal aspects of ACE in his interview after canceling it twice, then asked if he could be included without having to discuss the actual traumatic events of his childhood and adulthood—although he was happy for any facts he had previously discussed as part of his education to be included.

Consideration and negotiation of these differences concurred with the aim of the interviews to concur with feminist research which states: “feminism is derived from the emancipatory impulse of liberalism which in turn is an offshoot of Enlightenment thought…a belief in an essential human equality, a scepticism towards prejudice and tradition, and trust in external standards of rationality and justice
against which reality can be evaluated” (P. Usher, 1996, pp. 122-142). The interviews were also meant to exemplify the importance of the psychological aspect of enhancing and valuing social capital, rather than a voyeuristic exercise overriding interviewees’ sensibilities and sensitivities in favour of a research-defined ‘truth’.

While Pole and Lampard offer the definition of an interview as “A verbal exchange of information between two or more people for the practical purpose of one gathering information from the other(s)” (p.126), this definition did not fit comfortably with feminist theories which proposes an interview as an exchange of information between the parties. (Oakley, 1981) (Finch, 1984). The feminist model was, however, not adhered to for this research because of the time constraints necessary to achieve deadlines, and because the aim of the work was to examine factors around change as well as the individuals and group.

Post-modernist researchers have also questioned the relevance of the interviewing process because of concerns about the methods used for data analysis, the relationship between interviewer and interviewee plus the “complexity, uniqueness and indeterminateness of each one-to-one human interaction” (Scheurich, 1997, p. 64). Given that Pole and Lampard also acknowledged that the whole process of interviewing can never be entirely natural because of the premeditation and planning involved, this research did revolve around the awareness of all of the above writers, and attempted to ensure that—while acknowledging the contrived nature of the taped interview process—there was a sense of the ‘equality of contract’ which was a specific feature of diagnostic interviews in adult literacy.

### 3.1.3.3 Ethnographic fieldwork

Ethnographic fieldwork is based on the proposition that the ethnographer is a participant in the lives of the group of people being studied. Where a practitioner is
also the researcher, some observation has occurred before the study commences, both assisting to form the research questions but also echoing Glaser and Strauss's contention on which grounded theory is based—that social research generates propositions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 2).

In 1999, Smyth and Holian delivered a paper in which they questioned the credibility of researchers who choose to research the organization in which they have a strong history of engagement. They stated categorically that “we must surrender the idea that researching the meanings and interpretations we make of people in social situations can be objective” (Smyth & Holian, 1999, p. 1). Although they concluded that insider research was both useful and worthwhile, it was not desirable to attempt to distance the ‘research subjects’ in an attempt to validate the study, but proposed that the researcher enhanced their awareness of the importance of ethical considerations and lack of bias, instead of attempting to take an objective—and possibly unattainable—stance. This contention had been both endorsed and challenged by other ethnographers such as G. Fine who argued that every research which includes an element of ethnographic study faces ten dilemmas which often lead to the researcher holding ideals of objectivity but being forced into a position of doing the opposite. He maintained that these tensions can be resolved by diligence but should be acknowledged as part of any study (Fine, 1993). These different stances created a continuum of opinions wherein the researcher must select their own stance after consideration of the factors and personalities being studied, and all personal values, opinions and circumstances, in an effort to produce a balanced and worthwhile research document.

Smyth and Holian devised a comprehensive list of twelve issues which they recommended as being paramount to the stance of the dual-role researcher/participant
in an organization, all of which have been considered in this research, and used as a
guide. These recommendations included such practicalities as maintaining and
monitoring a continuing sensitivity to organisational events, demonstrating sensitivity
to power and authority issues, resilience and role/boundary management (Smyth &
Holian, 1999, p. 4).

Having undertaken internal research themselves, Smyth and Holian’s advocacy
of maintaining a strong and deep engagement on an ongoing basis, and rigorous use
of journals and peer reviews, have provided valuable insights into legitimising the
development of the propositions which formed out of this internal research of MAE.

3.1.3.4 Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is a general term for a number of approaches to analyzing
written, spoken or signed language used (Johnstone, 2002), also underpins this
research because of the intensity of focus given to language and literacy teaching and
the types of communication which occur between bonded adult learners, mentors and
teaching or placement staff. Robin Usher (R. Usher, 1996) contended that
“knowledge, being relative to discourses, is always partial and perspectival” (p.27).
He maintained that during the analysis of any discourse, social practices are codified
by binary and/or hierarchical dualities which the researcher and researched enact
within cultural contexts.

Usher’s contention applies to levels of difference between the participants of—
for example—any discourse between a researcher and subject. This was because
those differences could only be modified by movement along a continuum of polar
oppositions such as female-male, subject and object, and also, for this work, English
and other language speakers, literate adults and non-literate adults. Game also
maintained “there is no extra-discursive real outside cultural systems” (Game, 1991,
p. 4) which, for the sake of this research, was taken as recognising and validating all dualities but placing them within the context of the cultural system—that is, the community which is an ACE organisaton.

3.1.3.5 Textual Analysis

As part of the qualitative methods which comprise this research, there was a particular emphasis on the analyses of historical MAE business documents, on the published writing of adult students and on alternate texts such as jottings, examples of funding contracts, web-sites and curriculum documents. For this research it was taken that textual analysis could be considered—like discourse analysis—to be signified and interpreted within both the context and the historical moment of reading it. As R. Usher maintained, again like discourse analysis, text analysis has an underlying duality which is represented by ‘reality’ and its ‘representation’ in which educational research attempts to construct an interpretation of that reality (R. Usher, 1999, p. 33).

Although the methods of this study tended to endorse the contentions of Travers and Usher, it also acknowledged the work of post-modernists such as Roland Barthes who argued to the contrary, that is, that all traditional analysis of texts no longer apply with only “serial movements of disconnections, overlappings, variations” remaining once the context, history and authorial prescripts had been negated (Barthes, 1977, p. 158).

Of both discourse and text analysis, Pole and Lampard maintained the whole aim was to fulfill five key issues whereby:

1. “Analysis makes sense of data.
2. Analysis is creative.
3. Analysis contributes to the stock of knowledge.
4. Analysis must be thorough.

These five key intentions provided a practical set of criterion which often acted as reminders against being complaisant about accepting all theories proposed in texts as ‘truths’, and often led to editing of unnecessary detail in some of this study.

The research methodologies used to examine the emerging propositions based on the previous readings was thus primarily qualitative, using chronological historical research with a case study of an organisation and a group of key informants creating individual case studies. This was complemented by the quantitative statistical data interpreted by a range of Microsoft Excel spreadsheets transposed into graphs and charts. Three methods of eliciting information for this study were planned to accumulate sufficient data to validate any emerging propositions.

Firstly, an examination of both a formative ‘bottom-up’ and a structured ‘top-down’ historical developmental process to determine changes in aetiologies. This was achieved by documenting the formative stages of MAE’s history and comparing it with the contrived funding processes which was developed for implementing two projects, both of which commenced during 1999. These dual forms of aetiology provided a comparison of formative processes to demonstrate one form of change.

As part of the comparison, the data drawn from statistical reporting and annual reports provided a point of comparison to determine what—if any—quantifiable changes had occurred to funding amounts, composition of participant groups and delivery of courses.

Secondly, a brief, A4 page survey (Appendix 1:A) was sent to ACE stakeholders in MAE, three other northern metropolitan ACE providers (at Lalor, Thornbury and Diamond Valley) and some affiliates (regional office staff and
These acted as both a means of establishing people’s subjective responses to the idea of change, and an unthreatening introduction to the idea of being interviewed. This introductory sheet offered the opportunity to self-select without the pressure of having to refuse compliance, which may have been based on feelings of indebtedness given the nature of the researcher and stakeholders’ relationships.

The third method was using interviews with stakeholders based on their continued interest in participating after the gap of months—or even years—since the original expression of interest. This included an informal, preliminary discussion (or ‘coffee shop’ chat) on the type of questions to be asked. These questions were also supplied in advance which gave participants the opportunity to think about their responses, to make notes or to select the questions they preferred not to answer. The initial restriction of numbers was practical because of the time involved in preliminary discussions, working through the questions with people with low levels of English and literacy and the transcriptions, many of which contained emotional responses of significance to the interviewer.

3.2 Organisational Case Study

This study relates primarily to the ten years before the work was first documented in 2004-2005, but commenced with details of the twelve years prior those ten (1982-1994), so fulfilled Borg and Gall’s criteria for being suited to the methodology of an historical research of an educational organisation. (Borg & Gall, 1989)

Slee stated “The study of the history of education is blighted by a proliferation of ‘histories’ resting precariously on reminiscence and anecdote, loose generalization and crude functionalist assumptions” (1989, p. 3) and is no longer a fashionable means of researching. However, McCulloch and Richardson (2000, p.1) contended
the melding of history and education in research reinforces the continued relevance of using the methodology because of its appropriateness to education and because of the ephemeral nature of alternate sectors—such as ACE—particularly during an era when financial sustainability is an issue.

McCulloch and Richardson’s reiteration of both the value and individuality of the process as a distinctive and contemporary means of historical research relied heavily on the generic definitions of any qualitative approaches such as Denzin and Lincoln’s definition which “crosscuts disciplines, fields and subject matter” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 1).

The methods indicated to best conduct a major part of this research are based on case histories, primarily of the organisation as a whole which was in keeping with Yin’s definition as “the method of choice when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its content” (Yin, 1993, p. 3). Secondly, through a variety of semi-structured and interactive interviews with key informants who were stakeholders involved at each stage of the study, that is, being measured as participants in some category, completing a survey and—for eighteen—undertaking an interview. These individuals can also be considered individual case studies, fulfilling Stake’s description of a second form of case study as “collective”, that is, several cases of instrumental study (Stake, 1994, p. 240).

In describing research, Stake recommended the use of a triangulation of methods to ensure a “validity of communication” (Stake, 1994, p. 241). Undertaking the organisational study was reinforced by quantitative data in keeping with Phillips and Burbules’ contention that such data provided a post-positivist model in which observations, values and conclusions are based on “competent research” (Phillips & Burbules, 2000, p. 67). Methods used in naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba,
...and grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), (D. Scott & Usher, 1999) confirmed the integration of a range of procedures as effectively creating the desired triangulation.

Many of the business documents produced for internal distribution by the primary organisation used for the case study and those circulated externally for funding bodies, provided the majority of the statistical data analysed to support the qualitative aspect of the research. Internal MAE business documents used such as business plans, operating manuals, Annual Reports, and student statistical reports on databases such as VASS, ARMs and NROLLs and project reports such as Supporting educational diversity (Edgar, 1997) and Continuing to support organisational diversity (Edgar, 1998) provided the majority of quantitative data. Local Moreland City Council, Northern Metropolitan region’s ACFE policies and demographics, and ACFE regional and statewide statistics contributed to the data which used predominantly for historical research chapters in parts of this study.

3.2.1 Surveys

The use of a survey (Appendix 1:A) in this research was intended to introduce the idea of the research question to stakeholders to gain an initial overview of a wide diversity of opinions. It also complemented the interviews which resulted from the final question on the survey form inviting those surveyed to participate.

It was also conducted as a means of establishing the four criteria which underpin educational assessments (ANTA, 2005):

1. Validity, by reiterating some questions in the interviews to ensure the questions and language had not been misinterpreted. The answers—or lack of responses—were intended to give a brief validation of the main research questions or early, emerging propositions.
2. Currency, by spreading the surveys over two years, opinions expressed trends rather than simple reactions to conditions.

3. Sufficiency, ensuring a suitable amount of data was collected from a spread of participants from the diverse cultural and language groups, variety of ages and range of disabilities which characterise the local government area of Moreland.

4. Authenticity—as for validity—in that the responses were able to be equated to the interview responses to ensure there was some correlation between opinions or ideas expressed in both as part of the triangulation process. The inclusion of some participants with an in-depth knowledge of the sector resulted in an informed benchmark for questions relating to administrative details.

Designing the surveys and planning their initial distribution was based on ideas drawn from Cohen and Manion (1994), Pole and Lampard (2002), and Miles and Huberman (1994), adapted to suit the practicalities of researching within a very diverse community of languages and educational skills.

For this study, there was a deliberate blending of dual versions used for most educational research. Firstly correlation, where relationships between data were identified and the possibility of those relationships transferred to other settings was assumed. (Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis, & Ecob, 1988). In this research, this applied to some transferability from an individual case study of MAE to other ACE centres, but also for qualities and restrictions of the sector itself to be perceived as transferable to other largely female-dominated human services sectors such as aged or infant care, nursing or kindergarten and primary teaching.

Secondly, there is the *ex post-facto* research where causal relationships are retrospectively constructed into phenomena. (Christie & Oliver, 1969), (Cox, 1987). This occurred in this study where the historical research of the aetiology of MAE was
contrasted to—and compared with—the later developments of the 1999 projects LearnLinks and Dip FE which are discussed in Chapter 5.

The two most common forms of sampling done in research are probability (or random sampling) and non-probability sampling. Random sampling, according to Pole and Lampard’s contention is the most efficient and effective form which has “the most profound advantage [in] that it allows the researcher to rule out the possibility that research findings are biased by the way in which the sample was chosen” (Pole & Lampard, 2002, p. 33). This is achieved because random sampling is “one where every member of the population of interest has an equal chance of being included, and where every possible combination of \( n \) members of the population is equally likely (\( n \) is the sample size)” (Pole & Lampard, 2002, p. 35).

Because of this study’s limitation to the ACE sector, random sampling was not an option as the attitudes and engagement in the sector restricted the study to participants.

For the surveys used in this research, the sampling was achieved by the initial use of a flyer at MAE (Appendix 1.B) being posted on office and classroom walls, and placed in prominent places to engender discussion where the participants had low levels of language and literacy. A copy of the survey was posted to anyone expressing interest including former staff members and students who had shown interest in the idea of the research when first proposed. However, of the 67 who responded, 10 resulted from non-probability ‘snowball sampling’ where earlier respondents had referred them to the study or passed on copies of the form (Pole & Lampard, 2002, p. 36). The input of one of the participants “Biddy” can be considered to be ‘purposive sampling’ (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 200) because—
although a former project worker at MAE she was originally approached for comment because her work had a major influence on the sector.

The hundred distributed surveys distributed resulted in a 67% return, which was considered satisfactory—especially given the difficulties inherent in working with language and literacy students, and a high proportion of people with multiple social, personal and familial disadvantages. The number of participants could have been as high as five hundred if people had been approached individually, but this was avoided because of the possibility that people may have felt obliged to participate because they had class-fees waived by the researcher due to financial hardship, or felt emotionally manipulated due to the power imbalance between staff assessors and adult students.

Initially, two surveys were designed but these were amalgamated into the single A4 page (Appendix 1:A). This resulted from negative comments after a preliminary handout to four students to check language and suitability for distribution (Appendix 1: C). These students queried if their surveys were different to those given to staff members, having inferred a judgment on their abilities. As the aim of this work was to empower rather than disempower participants, a single survey was then developed based on refining the original two. A further result of this change involved considerably more introductory verbal directions and questioning. Although more difficult to assimilate and analyse, the range of choices offered to participants was more suited to addressing the four pillars of learning which underpin ACE: to know, to do, to live with others and to be (Delors, 1996). Survey respondents were also asked to indicate interest in a follow-up interview on a checkbox on the bottom of the form.
These surveys were deliberately planned to be short—a single A4 page—and contain a number of means of replying (circling words or numbers) and have one option for making a short comment. The reason for brevity was to avoid excluding people intimidated by forms, or with low literacy or language levels.

A small table with two lists—one more applicable to staff and the other to students—attempted to both address individual areas of interest and to permit a response to any of the topics so not to exclude any respondent from comment. In order to gain an indication of response to the topics in the tables, instead of using traditional words or numbers, the respondents were asked to use ‘+’ or a ‘-’ because people with low literacy or numeracy levels often recognise the positive and negative symbols on batteries, if not familiar with the plus and minus of numeracy. Many were touchingly earnest about their anxiety to give informed opinions. Because the survey relied on respondents being able to read and write at National Reporting System level 2, any participant below this level was able to discuss their questions or responses with another adult, which—while perhaps giving more positive responses—also permitted total inclusion.

3.2.2 Interviewing

Although D. Scott placed the interview in the same category as the surveys under the joint title of ‘Survey’ as a ‘type’ of educational research, for this study the two were separated. (D Scott, 1996, p. 33). This was planned for two reasons. Firstly, because the aims were different in that the first was intended to be introductory and to gain some input from people unwilling to be interviewed because of personal or psychological fears. Secondly, the two were not intended as opposing means of gaining data, for example by norm-referenced, standardised testing, but complementary and reinforcing.
Scott also questioned the use of surveys (including interviews and questionnaires in the same category) because they are usually designed very early without reference to emerging data. An additional awareness of this reservation of Scott’s led to the decision to stagger the dissemination of the survey forms and interviews over a three year period (December 2001 to January 2005) of the research while undertaking the reading for the study and the historical organisational research. Although this staggering of surveying and interviewing in conjunction with other aspects of the study was both demanding and time-consuming, it meant that the resultant theories and data-building became refined and maintained their relevance.

As part of this examination of the survey as a research method, Scott also queried the assumptions inferred by quantitative researchers that the researcher and researched ‘contaminate’ their research by becoming too close. He contended that what occurred was ‘reactivity’ rather than contamination, acknowledging that the actions of the researcher in educational settings may influence the conditions and structures of what was being researched. Because descriptions of educational settings are inherently incomplete, this reactivity was implicit and did not necessarily contaminate the research negatively (D Scott, 1996, p. 59).

However, Bhaskar contended that arguments attempting to polarise social-scientific and scientific methodologies have become outmoded in their opposing values against facts. Because of what Scott describes as the development of “new collateral theories of philosophy and ideology” (D Scott, 1996, p. 58), Bhaskar maintained that without a “sublation” of attitudes which include interpretive and reactive methods, researchers still unnecessarily attempt to distance themselves from the researched to prove decontamination (Bhaskar, 1979, p. ix).
This study did not attempt to prove decontamination from the researched, but maintains that the nature of human interaction inevitably results in a mutual exchange of ‘contamination’ as part of any dialogue including the interview process. However, any attempt to influence any response, opinion or idea has been minimised, less because of the risk of contamination than because of the core ACE value which empowers a participant.

The purpose of these interviews was to integrate comments made by stakeholders in a series of recorded, semi-structured interviews in order to maintain the formative aims of ACE providers: to engage those alienated from social and political status through critical literacy and self-expression. These individual cases were documented about a series of key informants, and planned as semi-structured (Hammer & Wildevsky, 1989) but also to accord with the third category of Stake’s tripartite definition of a case study which “draws attention to the question of what specifically can be gained from a single case”, (Stake, 1994, p. 236). The inclusion of the individual cases occurring within the larger case study of MAE provided an effective means of measuring if subjective reactions to the possibility of change have occurred. This provided a balance to the use of the quantitative data provided by funding sources, statistics on student profiles and organisational incomes.

3.2.2.1 Interviewing Process

Interviews took place with a number of self-selected participants. The general invitation to participate was on the survey form and was a subject which recurred in general discussions.

Each interviewee had a record sheet (Appendix 1:D) with name and contact details, copy of the Plain English statement and signed consent form (Appendix 1:E), comments such as where the interview took place and statistical data on the
participants such as age, language or cultural group, employment and previous education. Part of this brief tracking device and subsequent note-taking can be considered the “ongoing data and memos for the purpose of generating the best fitting and working idea” whereby the researcher “must decontain himself [sic] immediately by writing a memo on it” (Glaser, 1978, p. 8). These notes, tracking forms and memos also took the form of the tri-purposive fieldwork diary, where information is kept on events and experiences and notes of methods are recorded so that all data can be used as an analytical device. (Burgess, 1984)

Each interview participant was shown the original research records and invited to add, subtract or change information, just as they were provided with the list of interview questions (Appendix 1:F), and copies of their transcriptions (Appendix 2 CD ROM) for member-checking. Each participant was also asked to nominate a pseudonym to be used for reference within the research documentation. A number of participants asked that their own name be used even after explanations about the anonymity requirements of research. Initially they wanted their story to be told and saw no point in participating anonymously. This difficulty was compounded when people offered to have a photograph taken sometimes appearing to be anxious to become immortalised in print or as part of some unconscious desire for approval.

Originally, the interviews were intended to be conducted without introductory discussions. In order to improve the interviews, three people were asked if they would mind being ‘guinea pigs’. They were told their first—short—interview would be to give the interviewer a chance to practice and would be repeated later at length. During these three ‘practices’ the interviewees responded with replies which confirmed the perceived superiority of ACE in the belief that they owed the sector (and interviewer) support or thought MAE might gain increased funding from a
positive report. Subsequent interviewees had an informal, pre-interview chat where they were able to ask questions but were also reassured the interview was only for personal research and would not result in more funding for MAE, nor would the organisation suffer from criticism.

The preliminary process and the time taken to involve the interviewees were planned as a result of the alienating interviews conducted at MAE in the previous few years by external researchers who often described their questions as semi-structured. The questions asked were felt to be aimed at deliberately eliciting certain responses although for supposedly objective studies.

One of the first three trial interviewees wanted to wander into a more unstructured feminist model of interviewing (Oakley, 1981) where the interviewer and interviewee could develop a subjective interactive relationship. To avoid having to alienate the interviewees by constantly moving them back into the questions, this was negotiated by discussing the difference between unstructured and semi-structured interviews with participants, and establishing an understanding that both parties needed the framework to avoid the interview becoming a fully-fledged social chat. This decision was also based on Scott’s contention that the dialectic which was an interview was not based on a level plain but constantly changing themes and interests (D Scott, 1996, p. 65). These changes tended to reinforce the case for semi-structured interviewing which allows for this variation of levels but avoids the interchange becoming meaningless for the study involved.

An alternate view, however, is that the interviewer “comes to ‘know’ his subjects without ever necessarily having to engage in a reciprocal process of personal ‘social striptease’” (Ball, 1983, p.93-94), a stance which is anathema to educators
whose core pedagogical values relate to an equality of contact wherein all participants ‘strip’ to their own comfort levels.

Given consideration of these different approaches, the interviews for this study were semi-structured where discussion ensued from the set list of pinnacle questions. These were followed by some questions which were only applicable to the particular group of interviewees who were, for example, volunteers and students.

All interviewees were asked the set of general questions (p.1 of Appendix 1:F) to elicit opinions and perceptions of change—or lack of change—as well as some personal details to assist in an understanding of the participants who select ACE. Some people were asked a series of additional questions relevant to their own individual experience of the sector, for example in relation to changes in information technology or tertiary entry, which did not apply to everyone.

These interviews took place over three years with MAE people who had been involved in the organisation for up to the previous twenty years. They were drawn from committee members, volunteers, salaried staff members, former and present students.

Table 3.2  Numbers and Categories of Respondents to Surveys and Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Total Respondent or Interview Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>67*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>2 3 5 8 18*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From early in the research, there were problems categorising the participants because some students, volunteers and staff were also on the committee, and some
staff members were enrolled in classes. The roles of most survey respondents were unknown. For Table 3.2, the MAE interviewees were categorised by their initial—or primary—role although most were in multiple categories.

The comments, evaluations and opinions of interviewees are quoted throughout this document in numbered boxes; usually to clarify or support a contention, question a contention through dissent or to clarify a proposal. Details of the lives of all interviewees are presented in Appendix 1:G in the form of a brief biography, and their ideas, opinions and reminiscences are also analysed in Chapters 6-8.

The process used in this research draws on a multiplicity of sources as suggested by Glaser in 1978. He advocated an integration of the ideas and thoughts of a range of theorists without either engaging in ‘theoretical capitalism’ which does not acknowledge their work, nor by becoming a ‘theoretical serf’ who gives so much credence to the work of others that any originality is subsumed (Glaser, 1978, p. 9). While this work freely acknowledges the ideas and knowledge of Glaser, Huberman and Miles, Strauss, Corbin and others, it maintains originality in the selection of theories—or partial theories—chosen to integrate, quote or build on to elicit replies to the research questions or ways to examine, document and interpret emergent theories.
3.2.3 Examining Data

The methods used for analysing the data were predominantly suggested by grounded theorists such as Glaser, although, in keeping with feminist concerns that the elevation of one system reflects a patriarchal dominance, there was no strict adherence to any single orthodoxy of analysis. Instead, those aspects which best suited the research were used, often as suggested by Glaser, Corbin, Strauss and others. For the coding and hand-drawn diagrams, Miles and Huberman provided a stylistic guide, although MS Word was invaluable at re-creating the diagrams and tables in a more professional manner. For entry of survey and some interview data, MS Excel was used most effectively.

At the commencement of this study, many hours were spent evaluating and deciding whether or not to use a CAQDAS software package such as NVivo or N6
The decision to use MS Office suite to complement paper-based analysis was based on four main reasons: Firstly, the smaller numbers of participants involved—18—meant that manual examination of data remained practicable. Secondly, it was possible that while interviewing some second-language speakers, difficulties with grammar, accents and other aspects of speech may have caused the researcher confusion with electronic coding. Thirdly, like a number of qualitative researchers, some concerns included creating a distance from the data, that it would possibly lead to a more quantitative than qualitative form of analysis because of the emphasis it may place on counting (Mason, 1996), a concern reinforced by other researchers who expressed concerns that it will eventually lead to an increasingly homogeneous analytic form (Seidel, 1991). Other critics suggested that researchers can get so caught up in coding their data for CAQDAS analysis that they lose sight of the meaning of the actual data itself (Weaver & Atkinson, 1994).

Perhaps the most emphatic of the critics of CAQDAS such as Coffey et al (1996) and Barry who stated “There is some evidence that some inexperienced researchers cite CAQDAS software as a prop…claim[ing] Nudist as their method of data analysis as though Nudist were an epistemological standpoint” (Barry, 1998, p. 2, para. 2.6).

Additional factors included buying the software which was not financially justifiable for a worker paid under the PACCT ACE award, nor expending the amount of time spent evaluating and learning its use when this researcher’s employment required advanced knowledge of Microsoft plus the Macromedia suite, the Protea software packages, as well as the VASS, Nrolls and ARMs systems.
3.2.2.1 Historical Comparison

The first—and simplest—means of analysing the data in this study was by a simple comparison of MAE at two periods of its existence. Initially, this was comprised of a simple comparison of quantitative data gained by researching organisational documents such as Annual Reports, Business Plans and statistical reporting in order to question if change had occurred during the nominated period of 1994 and 2004. However, comparing attitudes and opinions as part of the evaluation of change was more complex and became part of the survey and interview processes relying more on a form of phenomenological approach. This was in order to find an explanation of any stages or transitions which described the essential nature of personal change. It was intended to provide interviews with an additional depth by encouraging both the participants and the researcher with the opportunity to engage in interactive, reflective acknowledgement of life experiences.

3.2.3.2 Constant Comparative Analysis

One of the most effective means of working within the suggestions of the grounded theorists was their development of the theory of constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) whereby pieces of data are compared for similarities and differences which eventually results in conceptualisation of possible relationships between the data. This constantly reiterated process of comparison was undertaken for this study in order to understand some aspects of human behaviour, experiences or life processes.

A number of coloured diagrams were developed to facilitate these comparisons and contrasts, an example of which is shown in Figure 3.3, where the original blank document was planned to accommodate the expected number of responses to each of the interview questions. The first—yellow—section related to the prompts for each
interviewee to tell some personal details, the second—light orange—section related to questions about ACE, change, opinions and ideas, while the third—dark orange—section was a group of questions which could be adapted to whichever role/s the interviewee had undertaken. There were considerable differences in the amount and style of data in the interviews (Appendix 2). Examples of the diagrammatic outputs are based on the following Figure in pp. 225-226 of Chapter 6.

**Figure 3.3.** Diagram developed to compare/contrast interview responses
3.2.3.3 Conceptual Analysis

This study also followed grounded theorists in their reliance on inductive reasoning processes to create the opportunities to generate ideas and hypotheses, rather than use deductive testing of hypotheses. Some early enquiries originated this study, including: ‘Is ACE becoming TAFE?’ and ‘Who are the stakeholders in an ACE organisation?’ Although they seemed to propose hypotheses which could be tested, they provided a base from which to develop causal explanations and theories of phenomena, especially during the initial stages before the integration of the data gained from survey respondents and interviewees.

The steps which followed this stage can be summed up in terms of those suggested by J.M. Morse as common to all forms of qualitative research: Comprehending the phenomena of the study, synthesising the relationships and linkages, theorising about the relationships, and re-contextualising the newly developed theories within a cycle of evolving knowledge (Morse, 1994, pp. 23-43).

3.2.2.4 Quality

The standards which all Australian RTOs must achieve to maintain their registration and pass an AQTF audit, provide a quality underpinning for this research. Data gained from both documentation and verbal reporting have been subjected to triangulation wherever possible; although subjective recounts cannot be verified in every case, they maintained the quality of audience verification described as ‘rang true’. (Thorne, 2000, pp. 68-70).

Examples of the electronic processes of analysing the data for this study were moved into the separate appendix document. These are provided to exemplify how the propositions emerged from the raw data.
Although Miles and Huberman’s examples of tables and figures provided ideas for presentation of data, the coloured diagrams—unless noted otherwise as for Bradshaw’s Conceptual Framework (Figure 2.4, p. 22)—were designed for the study and were original. The choice to create these visual presentations was deliberate for two reasons: firstly, because they are often the most effective means of encapsulating a point or theory, and secondly because—as is often the practice in education—aiming to use multiple presentation styles are used to engage all visual, auditory and kinaesthetic stakeholders.

3.3 Concluding Comment

This chapter described the methods used to research and analyse the ACE organisation selected as a case study—MAE—and the diverse community of participants who use a sector which is often perceived as quasi-educational.

Although choosing not to be locked into any one complete system, the study was planned to follow some of the principles and precepts of grounded theory based around Glaser and Strauss (1978), and Corbin and Strauss’s (1990) somewhat diverging ideas, in the belief that they offered the most adaptable system. Ideas proposed by Miles and Hubermann’s for ensuring academic rigour were maintained, while also avoiding becoming Glaser’s ‘theoretical serf’ (1978, p.31). This aim was also in keeping with the concept of bricolage, and kept alive the opportunities to introduce alternate methods of working with the data gained while investigating and analysing both the individual case which was MAE, and the groups of informants which were drawn from the survey respondents and the interviewees.
4. THE SECTORAL and HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MAE

"Accountability issue has become ‘HUGE’. The concept of ‘flexible learning’ no longer exists as tutors are anxious to comply with the end of year ‘completion rate’—What a farce!" (A survey respondent)

This chapter has three parts: The first part contains an overview of the Northern Metropolitan region area of Melbourne wherein MAE is part of an ACFE-funded network of providers. It records the results of the surveys which were distributed to 100 participants in order to gain a general idea of the opinions and participation of stakeholders within the region, before focussing on the organisation itself, and then on its participants through the series of interviews. Secondly, the chapter records information on the early development of MAE during the periods it was known as Coburg Adult Literacy Group (1982-3), Coburg Adult Literacy Association (1983-1993) and—briefly—Coburg Adult Education Association (1994). Thirdly, the state of the organisation in 1994-1995—when it became MAE—provides data to be compared with the research data from 2004 at the end of Chapter 5.

4.1 Respondents’ Characteristics

One hundred questionnaire sheets were distributed over a two and a half year period. The surveys were meant to establish some general benchmarks and opinions on perceptions of change in the ACE sector and to gain some understanding of the participants in programs.

Instead of relying on the historical organisational case study and the series of MAE interviewees, the subjective responses of both MAE personnel and a wider group of ACE stakeholders were checked by posting out the form (Appendix 1:A) to people from different ACE organisations in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. This was to establish a sense of the sector within which MAE operated. The questions also
gave a wider perspective than only MAE’s participants as it included people from other organisations. For practical purposes this extended group was drawn from other ACE centres in the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne in neighbourhood houses, learning centres, council workers and the regional office. The responses were examined by means of a tracking spreadsheet to create a list of common responses. (Appendix 1:H).

The methodology for the survey was described in Chapter 3. MAE’s committee expressed support and approval conditional to no pressure being placed on former or existing stakeholders to participate and all participants being given the option of changing their mind and deleting details. Anonymity was to be ensured at every point of the research.

A response rate of 67% was achieved which exceeded the initial expectation of 50%. That expectation had been based on the assumption that adult students with lower levels of language skills—although expressing interest originally—may have been intimidated by the form or process. This did not prove to be the case as was shown in the respondents’ statistics which follow.

The analysis of the data was considerably enhanced by the willingness of the participants to append their full names. The forms had an optional place for names and 100% of respondents wrote their full names. Because of the provision of these names, it was possible to ascertain some of the characteristics of the respondents. This was because each person was then aligned to an organisation from which could be inferred commonalities or differences which may have been centre-specific rather than applicable to the general participants in ACE in the region.
Although the inferences could not be completely accurate, the inclusion of the respondents’ full names gave an indication that coverage of the forms had been inclusive of second-language speakers, and because some respondents were well known as experienced practitioners in the region, their responses added value due to the longevity of their engagement in the sector.

4.1.1 Respondents’ Roles

Initially, the diversity of the participants’ roles seemed to be difficult to integrate into a single study because they included staff, students, volunteers and committee members. However, as one of the originating ideas of the research related to change within a community, the homogeneity of the major characteristics—that is the defining characteristics which made ACE centres horizontal communities of geographic and common interests—ensured a breadth of opinions from all stakeholders. As well as representing this commonality of interest in each community based on location and education, the data also demonstrated the heterogeneity which existed within the communities in relation to cultural and language backgrounds, qualifications and employment.

The data are representative of a number of individual ACE programs and of all roles (paid staff, volunteers and students). Although expected to provide another group, the “others” referred to in the survey were all included in one of the first three groups as well, so have not been differentiated. For example, library and regional staff members had also been students or volunteers in an ACE organisation.

Those members of ACE communities who were engaged for the longest periods were involved through multiple roles by undertaking studies, employment and voluntary work in the sector. This was equally obvious for interviewees, for example, May was an ACE neighbourhood house co-ordinator for five years. She was an ACE
manager at a different centre, a project worker in a third centre, and became a
member of the committee of management of a fourth centre close to her home. In the
same way, Gladys was the manager of one centre and later a student and volunteer at
another, while Maeve was a volunteer, became a student and then administrative
worker at MAE, joining a committee at a local neighbourhood house as well.

Figure 4.1. All of the roles which respondents fulfilled in ACE.

Within the designated groups, a Student represented any participant whose only
role within ACE has been in that capacity, although the type of student—language
and literacy, VCE, vocational or general preparatory (employment skills as of 2005)
was not defined. Likewise, Staff referred to any teacher or trainer who had only
undertaken that single role, although whether as a teacher with a degree and
education diploma, or a trade-qualified trainer with the Certificate IV in Assessment
and Workplace Training (‘TAA’ in 2005) was not evident. Paid administrative
workers and IT support staff and project workers also came under ‘Staff’. 
Committee of Management and Volunteers are represented in this diagram as C/V because committee members are unpaid and therefore fulfil voluntary roles, and the aim of this survey was to keep it uncomplicated to ensure a maximum of returns. These 2 roles are differentiated in the research for the more detailed study of the interviewees. The ‘Other’ referred to in the categorisation were librarians because of their intensive engagement in MAE’s program for over 20 years because the shared venue meant professional and casual mingling of MAE and library staff. At various times, many served as volunteers, committee members, front desk personnel and were family members of staff and students. This symbiotic relationship had commenced in 1982 and was still current in 2005.

This chart demonstrated the spread of roles of the respondents to the survey, clearly indicating that the research had engaged a variety of opinions and experiences and not a single viewpoint.

Although the status and involvement of each participant seemed obvious during the first contact, it quickly became apparent that an unexpected outcome of this research was the demonstration of the multiplicity of roles which had been undertaken by each participant.

This level of engagement reinforced the findings of researchers such as Heimstra (2002, 2003), who equated ACE with horizontal communities which engaged participants based on geographical and familial commonalities described more fully in Chapter 2 (pp. 5-6). Heimstra (2002) explained the characteristics of a horizontal community in terms of strong family and associated groupings and identification with the community, expressed through a number of levels of engagement rather than a simplistic single role, for example as a student of a vertical community.
The high percentage of staff members who had also enrolled as students (as distinct from Professional Development activities undertaken elsewhere or in TAFEs and Universities)—whether concurrently, or in the reverse order—indicated a strong commitment to the value of the learning undertaken in the centres for both students and staff. It also demonstrated a diminishing of the student/staff polarity which was a characteristic of primary and secondary education and was prevalent in other post-compulsory education as was commented on by a number of interviewees in the following chapters.

4.1.2 Respondents’ Years of ACE Involvement

Table 4.1: Years of ACE Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>4-6</th>
<th>7-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-20</th>
<th>20+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAE</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ACE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The years of involvement in ACE within all categories indicated that the highest numbers of respondents actively engaged in the sector were originally from 1-3 years. This was due to a number of reasons: Firstly, at MAE they were the most accessible for this research, and secondly, that large numbers of participants engaged in the sector achieved their goals, relocated or left. For example, with AMEP clients—that is, new arrivals who are often refugees—many were placed in temporary accommodation and quickly relocated in permanent homes. This reduced the measurable outcomes for programs, but achieved the students’ aims—to engage in social practices and language classes.

There were also large numbers in the 4-6 and 7-10 cohorts indicating that a large percentage of the ACE stakeholders who completed the survey were longer-termed connections. However, there were also many reasons why these numbers
occurred, for example, people with very low language and literacy levels were not asked to completed forms to save anxiety, and participants who received forms at other centres tended to distribute them to staff and volunteers and not students who may have had difficulty completing them because of low language and literacy levels.

Because some survey respondents had returned forms in 2001, a follow-up contact was made to the MAE participants to determine if the person was still engaged in some way with ACE in 2005. The numbers update the above chart which was the initial response by the participants. After three years, 21 of the total 35 MAE participants were still affiliated with MAE in some capacity and another three had returned. Seven of the 21 had moved into the next cohort. This longevity of connection was first indicated by these surveys and was reaffirmed during the interviews.

For the respondents from the wider northern region, of the 23 able to be located (either by other workers at the centre of through ACFE networks), 11 were still actively engaged in the same ACE organisation, five were reported as having moved interstate or retired and relocated, four were working or studying in different ACE centres and three had moved into the TAFE sector.

This maintenance of contact showed a surprisingly large number which emerged from the follow-up contacts, changing the original contention that most students moved on quite quickly. Although it was not possible to give accurate data given the high number of unknowns, there was a clear indication that many people had longer connections to ACE than was expected.

A full study was not undertaken at this point, although a future development of a proposition examining the contention that ACE participants are becoming
increasingly connected to their sectoral community remains possible for a later study.

Although the responses to the question on length of association (Appendix 1:A) reflected a natural diminishing of numbers as time passed, a large number (60%) had retained a connection with MAE (figures for the participants from other centres were not sufficiently accurate—except to demonstrate a trend) for more than the three years, indicating a high percentage of long-term engagement by students, staff or volunteers, in keeping with their engagement in a community rather than a single-purpose educational facility.

4.1.3 Respondents’ Sex and First Language

As for MAE, participants from other organisations were drawn from a variety of roles, but for this analysis of the survey data for Tables 4.2-4.4, they were attributed with their main role at the time of the survey response. This problem of allocating a status confirmed the difficulty of categorising participants in any role within the sector because of the recurring motif of multiplicity of functions undertaken by stakeholders.

| Table 4.2  Survey Participants from MAE and other ACE Centres by Role |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| | Students | Paid | Volunteer | Committee | Total |
| MAE | 18 | 11 | 5 | 1 | 35 |
| Other ACE | 1 | 17 | 4 | 22 |
| Other participants | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 10 |
| | 24 | 29 | 8 | 6 | 67 |

| Table 4.3  Survey Participants from MAE and other ACE Centres by Sex |
|-------------------|-------------|-----------|
| | Female | Male | Total |
| MAE | 22 | 1 | 35 |
| Other ACE | 20 | 2 | 22 |
The 73% of female representation was typical of the engagement of some neighbourhood house centres created with females as their initial priority group, where men’s participation was slower, and some—like Thornbury Women’s Neighbourhood House—had remained female-centred with males only using the facility in evenings.

Table 4.4 Survey Participants by First Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAE</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ACE</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 63% of English-speakers was higher than MAE’s percentage because a number of local government areas (LGAs) in the northern region of ACFE had very low percentages of other-language speakers.

4.1.4 Ages of Respondents

Although information on the break-down of the respondents’ ages was not specifically identified, because the respondents gave their names, it was possible to determine the approximate ages (within decades) of 73% of the people. This does not necessarily indicate the ages of participants in ACE, only those interested in completing the survey. For programs like MAE which was centred in a library, this data could be expected to differ from many other ACE centres with more in the 55+ cohort, unlike for programs with youth-specific programs (Clemans, Hartley, & Macrae, 2003).
What is important for the research was that all age-groups and many language-
groups were represented in some way and their responses considered.

### 4.2 ACE Sectoral Changes

The third question asked if respondents thought ACE had changed since their
first involvement in the sector. It asked for a simple yes or no response.

![Has ACE Changed?](image)

**Figure 4.2.** Respondents who believe there has been a change in ACE.

The respondents were invited to write a short comment in answer to this survey
question. There was a wide diversity of comments from the 51 (75%) who addressed
the question. The spreadsheets (Appendix 1.H) showed the total number in more
detail but Figure 4.3 demonstrated the key areas of response for each of the three
main—and one minor—categories which attracted comments. Originally labelled
business administration, teaching, delivery and people’s values in the early
spreadsheet, the names were later adapted as more data emerged and the cyclical
process of analysis commenced.

Predictably, there were those who felt that the sector had been improved by the
change, for example by running more classes, while others thought more classes
suited to their personal interests would have been an improvement. Others—mainly students—made only positive comments, while others—mainly staff members—were only negative. Some participants felt that a change had been made but made no further comment.

**Figure: 4.3.** Negative comments in relation to changes in ACE

The emphasis of the negative comments was predominantly business or economic. People felt overwhelmed by accountability, record-keeping, audits and the multiple demands of funding bodies. Significantly, they were remarked on by students and volunteers as well as paid staff, indicating that even those stakeholders not involved in the business or teaching sides of ACE were aware of a ‘trickle down’ effect which impacted on teaching records and other enrolment and student processes.
As can be seen in Figure 4.3, people were mainly concerned with negative issues needing immediate solutions such as being overwhelmed by administrative tasks or teachers wanting less record-keeping.

Box 4.1: Examples of negative comments by respondents

- “Greater administrative and compliance issues to deal with.” (Staff)
- “With accredited classes, centres have become more bureaucratic—greater demand for accountability, and so more time spent showing evidence of what has been done, is being done and will be done.” (Staff)
- “Too much paperwork. I.T. great. Want too many quals.” (Staff)
- “Constant changes in accountability methods. Accountability overwhelming. Too much concentration on statistics.” (Staff)

The fifth question on the survey asked if people felt positive (+) or negative (-) about a range of subjects and issues as in the table below

Table 4.5 List of Issues and Themes, Question 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>这些问题可能对工作人员更加重要</th>
<th>这些问题可能对学生更加重要</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff qualifications</td>
<td>Type of Courses You Can Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation/Certificates</td>
<td>Changing teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Packages</td>
<td>Getting Certificates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student profile changes</td>
<td>Using computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology and online</td>
<td>Fees and charges for courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business/Strategic Planning</td>
<td>Cost of materials/photocopied sheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation/records</td>
<td>Size of classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels of pay</td>
<td>Information for Students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the data spreadsheet demonstrated (Appendix 1.F), the use of the positive and negative signs gave high response rates for this question, without alienating respondents. This may in part have been the result of using the symbols of + and – which were familiar and easily identified markers for adult literacy students. Those who asked for clarification of the terms and words were thus able to take the form away and confidently place the symbols instead of writing words.
The table on the survey was a complex set of propositions often relying on an in-depth knowledge of the sector to be able to respond effectively. The questions were designed to signify trends and identify overly emotive responses which could be inferred as stronger indicators of changing conditions or attitudes.

4.2.1 Staff Responses

Those questions more applicable to staff members’ interests elicited a large number of predictable responses: negatively in regard to an emphasis on staff having to complete the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training to remain employable, and the rates of pay for ACE workers which were not commensurate with their qualifications and experience when compared with the TAFE rates. An example of this can be demonstrated for 2005, where ACE workers received between $25 and $36 per hour while TAFE teachers received up to $50 for similar qualifications and experience and delivering the same accredited courses.

For students, negative responses related to the types of courses available and to changing teachers. Because students were encouraged to articulate and validate personal choices and requirements, there was often a discrepancy between demand and the types of courses a centre was able to offer under funding agreements that are negotiated according to allocations of student contact hours (SCH) by subject areas. For example, for the year 2004 at MAE the ACFE funding agreement allocated 18,670 SCH to language and literacy, 2200 in VCE, 3967 in general preparatory and 6700 in vocational education (ACFE, 2004). In the RMIT contract, MAE was more specifically allocated 3000 in Certificate 11 in IT (Applications) and 1500 in Access and Preparatory CGEA level 2 (RMIT, 2004). Because the Ministerial Statement (ACFEB, 2003) led to a change in funding for OTTE-funded courses, both RMIT and ACFE were not prepared to fund the Certificate 11 in Business courses as there was
perceived not to be a demand (that is, from employers, not students). This meant that ACE students who had not completed the full course during 2004 but only a number of units, and believed they would be able to complete more units in 2005, may temporarily have been very negative about the types of courses offered in ACE.

The issue of changing teachers reflected one of the staple complaints of adult students in ACE. This was due to a whole range of factors such as the mid-course loss when the casual teacher was offered permanent hours elsewhere. Many ACE providers had a high change-rate for staff due to comparatively low pay rates and high levels of casual employment with long unpaid holiday periods, forcing teachers to find more permanent employment by swapping their working hours to incorporate TAFE employment as they rarely found full employment in a single ACE venue.

Many ACE staff members faced ‘burn-out’ when working at multiple venues. For example at MAE, in 2003 one former staff member worked at three ACE centres and undertook work for the regional council leading to increased hours of travel, multiple meetings and no sense of a stable workplace. At MAE in 2004, another teacher worked at three venues (PRACE, Glenroy and Moreland). Yet another worked at Reynard Street, Thornbury Women’s and Brunswick community houses, as well as at MAE while helping run the family restaurant, while a third worked at MAE and at up to five libraries as a casual worker. One AMEP teacher worked at MAE, AMES and Holmesglen, while yet another worked at MAE, Chisholm and Holmesglen. This pattern continued throughout 2005 and 2006.

Adults who engaged in ACE as a community centre could become emotionally or socially attached to staff members—either appropriately or inappropriately—and resent change. While this emotional transference was not only peculiar to ACE
centres, the informality of the sector tended to create unrealistic demands for friendship or relationships.

**Box 4.2: Loss of Staff Contact**

"[There is] less contact of co-ordination staff with students."
Survey respondent

“You could wander up and you could talk to somebody and even though you talk to someone now, you sort of feel ‘Well I can only—Hurry up. Hurry up’.”
Julie, lines 1017-9

“[They} went off and they came back and they made one comment. And they said ‘We know you love us’. You know, that the tutor, it’s not just …, the tutor I’m talking about, you know.”
Rani, lines: 531-3

Staff members also found changing funding models and categories destabilising as they had to update or gain new qualifications to remain employable within a centre.

**4.2.2 Students’ responses**

Students often expressed disappointment that they could not continue under one single teacher, often because the primary-school model was the only one to which they could relate and was the only one they associated with positive learning.

Many ACE students resented changing teachers because it tended to destabilise their learning goals, particularly if they had recently returned to education. Having expectations of full-time classes modelled on mainstream sectors, the limited contact-times of ACE classes tended to be short with learning extended over longer periods due to funding constraints. For example, a literacy class met for three hours each week due to the organisation only being funded for limited student contact hours in the Certificate of General Education, and therefore participants could take three
years to achieve their goals. An additional factor was that parents and other carers only had limited times to attend classes, effectively reducing potential class times to periods when children were at kindergarten or childcare, and adult relatives being minded by others or on council-supervised outings.

All-over, students were less inclined to add any comments on their forms, and particularly critical ones even though the addition of a name was optional. Whereas paid and unpaid staff offered criticism of changes which had occurred in ACE, the few students who added comments tended to write positive encouragement.

The total positive responses were fewer, however, with the majority mentioning changes to technology, particularly in relation to more access and improved equipment.

Box 4.3: Examples of positive comments by respondents

“More programs/courses offered. Better and faster computers. Larger range of computer software.” (Student)

“More accent on computers now. Bigger program, more people involved. Wider range of subjects available.” (Student)

“It has grown in size and scope of courses offered.” (Student)

“The centres have retained the relaxed and friendly atmosphere and inclusiveness which have been the special qualities of ACE.” (Staff)

These positive comments were grouped with the addition of the ‘community’ category. There had been no comments which could be grouped as negative for issues relating to ‘community’ indicting that respondents did not believe there had been any unconstructive changes in the areas which constituted such a category, i.e. venues, local demographics, facilities, transport and other factors related to a sense of location.
Referring back to Heimstra’s concept which would have made most ACE centres horizontal communities, this lack of negativity may have indicated people’s sense of identification with the centre through which they identified their homes, sense of personal attachment and ownership.

![Diagram showing changes in ACE]

**Figure 4.4.** Positive comments in relation the changes in ACE

Most positive comments related to the improvements to IT-related courses and resources which many people felt made them more connected and empowered the language-skills and knowledge of technology.

Some respondents tried to offer a more balanced opinion by applauding the improvements in technology, while criticising the loss of the hand-on approach due to the demands for paperwork and accountability.

Overall, respondents’ comments resulting from the questions about change, combined to create a picture of a sector where the staff members were struggling to cope with the administrative load (the most frequent comment), feeling underpaid and overworked due to the expansion of programs, and overwhelmed by increased
accountability. However both staff and students displayed more satisfaction with increased numbers of courses, improved and expanded IT and general growth. A number commented that the students have remained ‘the same’ by which it appeared they endorsed the increased diversity and inclusiveness. At the same time people deplored that there seemed to be less interaction between managers, co-ordinators, staff and students.

Although the survey was not intended to be either an in-depth or highly accurate version of data and opinions on the ACFE-funded ACE of the northern metropolitan region, it gave an overview of the diversity of people who engaged in ACE centres—at least in the region—and an indication of their opinions on changes and issues in the sector. It also succeeded in gaining input from a diverse group of participants with a wide variety of roles, and thus created a context for the research into MAE as the case study of an organisation.

4.3 MAE in its Early Years

The survey had produced some ideas which extended beyond the initial questions that instigated this research, relating to the ideas of change within the sector, and to the people who engage in ACE and their reasons for remaining attached to organisations.

Having provided an overview of opinions and issues faced in the northern region’s ACE program, commencing an examination of a single program began with researching its aetiology and continuing development. This was because there appeared to be few equivalent studies which had been conducted in Victoria.

Thus this section of work documents the historical research of the educational organisation between its formative years in the early nineteen eighties to the years selected to complete this study around 2004.
Although studies of larger Victorian institutions such as the CAE existed, very few ACE organisations—especially those which developed in traditionally industrial areas—had researched their aetiology, although booklets written about volunteering or celebrating anniversaries had been written by organisations such as Glenroy Adult Education and Diamond Valley Learning Centre.

The program which commenced in Coburg Library in 1982 was still in existence at the commencement of 2006 having operated out of up to ten additional venues within the local government area of Moreland. The library venue was still retained as its base and legal address.

The following sections of this work are organised chronologically, beginning with the implementation period of the organisation as Coburg Adult Literacy Group and following its formative years up until 1994—the years being used for comparison to research possible changes which have occurred between then and 2004. This chapter ends with the section on 1994, while Chapter 5 continues the organisational case study by tracing the period between 1994 and 2004, and ends with a section which documents the state of the organisation in 2004, to compare with 1994.

The main office and legal address of MAE have been in Coburg Library since the first meetings which planned its inception in 1982. The library itself is on the corner of Victoria and Louisa Streets in the centre of the very busy Coburg shopping centre—one of the few very successful strip-shopping areas remaining in Melbourne. Use of this venue was negative and positive for the organisation; positive in that it was a prime location within the extremely busy library in the main shopping and parking areas. It has been negative in that the class-room space and office spaces were confined and the organisation has never had external signage. This was because the organisation was never able to gain permission from the library to erect a sign on
the outside of the building, although internal metallic strip and a cloth sign were placed on one of the internal back walls.

Undertaking this historical research using the records of a small organisation was a time-consuming and random business. This was because—like most small businesses and ACE organisations—although most records and documents had been kept, they were haphazardly piled in cardboard boxes almost regardless of categories and dates. Application forms were not signed, some materials were undated but filed in date-groups (1983-6) or according to content (co-ordinator’s salary). Over the years, the boxes had broken open due to relocation, lids were lost, contents redistributed and miscellaneous undated papers included. For MAE, the early materials researched were predominantly from twelve archive boxes, as the post-1998 materials were in six filing cabinets. Early texts, magazines, organisational publications and journals were from bookshelves spread over three locations.

The decision to research MAE as the organisational case study was a practical one because of pre-existing knowledge of many aspects of the organisation. Because the vision, purpose and value statements of the program had been maintained for more than twenty years, there was a sense of continuity and retention of core values which augured well for comparative data.

This was despite the difficulties such small ACE organisations face in three main areas. Firstly, the largest problem facing any ACE program with a high percentage of concession card-holders, was in generating sufficient funding to ensure sustainability. Secondly, the difficulty posed by competing for the work of qualified and experienced teachers in a competitive work-environment. And thirdly, the difficulties voluntary committees of management had in grappling with the responsibility, terminology and concepts of managing staff, OH&S, risk management
and strategic planning. This was particularly difficult when there was a very high percentage of CALD and other special needs members.

4.3.1 Origins

In the early 1980’s the former Preston TAFE (now Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE) in St Georges Rd, Preston—a northern suburb of Melbourne—conducted adult literacy teaching by training and pairing a voluntary tutor with a student with low literacy levels of skill, very much like the CAE-initiated Glenroy program. From 1982, a small group of these volunteers met around Coburg to tutor in literacy, beginning the original Coburg Adult Literacy Group (CALG) supported by the Preston TAFE program.

In 1983, the other local programs—Preston and Glenroy—were in different local government areas, and Coburg was a single suburb of the north suburban area of Melbourne. Formed during the council amalgamations of 1994, the City of Moreland was a municipality of 51+ square kilometres, situated north of the GPO between the local government areas of Hume, Darebin, Moonee Valley, Yarra and Melbourne. At the time it was comprised of the suburbs of Brunswick, Brunswick East, Brunswick West, Coburg, Coburg North, Fawkner, Merlynston, Glenroy, Gowanbrae, Hadfield, Oak Park, Pascoe Vale and Pascoe Vale South and was characterised by pockets of diversity which include a high unemployment rate, an aging population and pronounced multicultural diversity. Glenroy became a somewhat reluctant part of the LGA now known as Moreland. During the formative years of the Coburg program, however, Glenroy was not under the same council and the two programs were too far apart for student referrals or to share resources.

During 1983 to 1985, Coburg Adult Literacy Group (CALG) remained an affiliate of the Preston TAFE institute. This was evidenced by their co-ordinator
writing early funding applications for Coburg, undertaking training of volunteers, and maintaining membership of the committee of management. This affiliation continued until 1986.

As a result of a successful initial application to VALG, the CALG meeting at Coburg Library on the 2nd of August 1984, (CALG, 1984d) elected 5 office bearers for the roles of Honorary President, Honorary Vice-president, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Co-ordinator, plus two other ordinary members.

On 13th Sept, 1984, CAL Assoc. Inc. conducted an inaugural Annual General Meeting (CALG, 1984a). The constitution was ratified at this meeting and on 29th October, 1984, the organisation was incorporated by the Department of Justice, becoming Coburg Adult Literacy Association Incorporated No: 2850, ('CALA'). (CALA, 1984). Becoming incorporated meant the organisation was able to apply for government funding in its own right.

In the Constitution presented to gain incorporation, the organisation documented its primary purpose as the teaching of literacy, which was then defined in terms of reading and writing in English—mainly to English-speakers. This also included the adult children of long-term migrants with near English-speaking language abilities—later to become ‘high-oracy NESBs’ (i.e. students with Non-English Speaking Backgrounds who spoke English well). In Coburg this was mainly the second generation children of Italian and Maltese parents. Despite a high proportion of Greek-speakers, there was a low enrolment of Greek youth anecdotally assumed to be because their literacy problems were being addressed at the local Saturday morning Greek schools.

The submission for incorporation involved the development of an organisational Constitution which contained Articles outlining the composition of the
committee of management, how to conduct its meetings and its financial dealings. These articles were based on the Victorian ‘Model Rules for an Incorporated Association: Associations Incorporation Act, 1981’ which involved addressing five pages of articles.

CALG’s original Constitution application listed 10 articles, the most pertinent for understanding the nature of the organisation was:

“Article 2: Objectives

1. To promote an awareness of adult literacy in the Coburg area and provide a resource for the development of literacy skills.

2. To provide a base in the Coburg area for training and supporting prospective tutors.

3. To provide instructional materials suitable for use with adult literacy students.

4. To appoint, support and advise a co-ordinator.” (CALG, 1984b)

Box 4.4: Recollections from over Twenty years

“In those days it started up they were working out of the library, just a little room. And she [daughter] told me they were going to have this course, six weeks, to go and see if you could do volunteering. … At the time I’d just been divorced and she felt, people felt the need to get me involved.” …

“Oh, there wasn’t a lot going on in those days, it was just a sort of organisation and they were a bit haphazard about what they were offering, I thought... It was just teaching people like doing little voluntary classes of two or one-to-one. … You just had sort of pot luck in what you taught and what you knew.”

Maeve lines: 154-157, 172, 177-180

4.3.2 Volunteers and Charity
This initial formative period of development occurred during the main expansion period of adult education in Australia and has been effectively documented in Victoria for the period of 1948-1989 (Stephan, 1992). With a title which clearly emphasises Stephan’s contention that adult education was a purely voluntary activity (“A great many volunteers of all kinds”) she traces the development of such education since the period before World War One when “Albert Mansbridge brought the enthusiastic gospel of the WEA [Workers’ Educational Association] to Melbourne” (Stephan, 1992, p. 1). Although she fails to acknowledge existing adult educational practices and philanthropic movements to educate working men, for example by RMIT’s Frances Ormond, her study is interesting because of its constant references to the charitable, voluntary and ‘gospel’ nature of Victoria’s Adult Education Association (AEA). The repetition of very recreational, middle-class activities such as camera clubs (pp. 50, 117, 115, 193), classical guitar workshops (pp. 48,192), fantasy and science fiction (p. 253), literary circle, scrabble group, mahjong classes, philosophical circle and public speaking group, indicates a totally different program to the life-skills literacy provided by the Coburg group. The conservative nature of the AEA in Victoria is indicated by the setting up of a Labour College by the Trades Hall Council in opposition, despite the AEA’s origins within the WEA (Stephan, 1992, p.6). Yet the basis of volunteerism was a common thread in all of the forms of these adult education associations.

By the early 1980’s when the AEA and the CAE virtually amalgamated, the types of courses listed by Stephan included French club, Geology group, Cake decorating, Overeaters Support, Norfolk Island Holiday Tour, Natural History group and Daytime Discussion (Stephan, 1992, p.189). Although the Glenroy, Diamond
Valley, Coburg and other northern suburbs groups were functioning well before the close of Stephan’s study, they were not mentioned.

Even the types of volunteerism appeared to differ between the personal enrichment courses and those promoting literacy, as training to teach was a requirement for volunteers undertaking a one-to-one role with adults having low levels of literacy and the concomitant low self-esteem which needed to be addressed.

While the model of the AEA was that later followed by the University of the Third Age (U3A) where volunteers taught each other according to their existing skills and interests, the teaching of literacy required an intense course of tutor-training during which people were assessed for the characteristics of an effective tutor and shown skills in enhancing reading and writing.

Volunteers were trained with a number of current resources, such as ‘Tutoring adults in basic education’, a series of booklets produced in Edinburgh, Scotland (SCEC, undated) and a range of simple reading materials and handouts produced in England from the original Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU) in 1980, which, since the integration of children’s learning has become the organisation known as the Basic Skills Agency.

Because most materials had been developed for English speakers, there tended to be cultural biases such as the naming of the booklets ‘Jean’ and ‘Bob’ with references to eating fish and chips and pies. Such texts quickly became inappropriate by the nineties when the diversity of students became more reflective of the local area and Coburg developed its own volunteer-teaching materials based on negotiated student selection.
Box 4.5: Resourcing Literacy

“Some books we used had photographs of people with intellectual disabilities which upset students who had spent years trying to convince friends and relatives they had literacy problems and not intellectual disabilities. MIDs enjoyed seeing people with their own problems as learners. With hardly any money, this often meant stretching the money to cover two sets of materials or having to be really inventive.”

Jules, lines: 139-142

During the formative period of MAE—like most organisations reliant on volunteers—there was a heavy emphasis on ‘good works’. Volunteers tended to be people involved in churches, other volunteer groups or retired former teachers. An emphasis on worthiness was acknowledged in training materials at the time, and an “overall motivation and behavioural disposition” (Muldoon & Anderson, 1986, p. 1) were expected from students—especially those sent through the Office of Corrections receiving early parole with the requirement that they would improve their literacy levels. These attitudes were not questioned in the early days of the ACE sector, until Paolo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed started to influence the Victorian ACE sector.

An examination of the early minutes of committee meetings demonstrates the perceived links with charity which dominated the organisation’s attitudes, especially as most members were also involved in local churches, and clearly conceived of a link between the two activities.
A clear example of this link between charity and literacy occurred repeatedly when the primary activity of the committee during the Aug-Sept period of each year until 1989, was to collect for the Red Cross, when CALA volunteers were encouraged to participate as part of their enactment of charitable work (CALA, 1985b). An inward-looking emphasis effectively restricted the organisation financially as it missed many opportunities to expand its operations before there were many other such organisations. Most importantly, it restricted its access to local government funding and infrastructure provision as CALA existed before the local neighbourhood houses and did not promote its activities in local government circles before the council had committed itself to the huge expansion of ‘houses’ which followed shortly after this period.

4.3.3 Participants

There appeared to be no documentation of the participants involved as teachers and limited information on students in the first year of CALG. The following figures result from amalgamating a number of lists and forms, as full and accurate records

Box 4.6: Early Committee Activities

“‘Reen’ was our secretary on the committee and she was a Red Cross fanatical woman. She got me going around doing house-to-house taking up the collection.”
“ She was involved in the local Baptist or Uniting Church, so I don’t know whether she did that through the church or she took it on herself.”
Maeve: Lines 200-202, 221-222

“It was like joining a little club or family. We spent hours learning how to tutor, then all sat around swapping stories and talking about families—always with food and snacks. One older woman used to bring in cream sponges and home made yoyos.”
Jules, lines: 61-63
were not a requirement for early ACE centres. As the comparison data being used for this study relates to 1994 to 2004, the following was presented as an estimation of the equivalent early statistics for general interest. Using these limited records, the estimated total combined numbers of personnel at CALG were:

![Figure 4.5. Number of Committee members, staff and students 1983-5](image)

(Note: Figures from CALG/CALA Committee minutes and correspondence 1983-5 and student statistics 1983-5)

![Figure 4.6. Birthplace during early years](image)
Note 1: Figures are a guide only as they were extrapolated from sheets of committee and volunteer contact details plus lists of student names for 1983-1985.

Note 2: Committee and volunteers’ names are used as a guide to ethnicity, endorsed by ‘Maeve’ the only committee member/volunteer involved at the time who was able to be traced for this study.

Figure 4.7. Estimated numbers and ages of MAE stakeholders 1983-5

Note: The ages of volunteers and committee members were estimated by Jules and Maeve, early participants. Student datum on age is only available for 1985.

Box 4.7: Recollections of Early Stakeholders

“They were all about my ages in their forties or fifties…I don’t think we had a lot of young people involved”. “We didn’t have very many languages. No, we sort of had the odd—no, not actually on the committee or anything”

Maeve: Lines 185, 194-5

“The volunteers were nearly all old and I felt quite a baby at 30, but I always got on well with oldies because of Gran. They were more like the olds who run op shops.”

Jules, lines: 63-65

These early records indicated that the composition of the Coburg Adult Literacy group during its formative years was extremely biased toward Australian born
English-speakers, especially in relation to the dominant, decision-making personnel who can be characterised as middle-aged or near-retirement age, and Australian-born. This reflected the characteristic of most local volunteer-based organisations both in the '80s and succeeding years.

The one noticeable factor which differentiated this organisation from many similar has been the higher than usual number of male members at all levels.

![Figure 4.8. Sex of Early Participants](image)

*Note: Committee and Volunteer names were used to define sex. None on record was ambiguous.*

As literacy-teaching was—like many volunteer activities at the time—largely female dominated, the continuing interest and involvement by males was largely due to the organisation’s position within a library building. Unlike the female focus of the neighbourhood houses which were also being planned at the time, using libraries was not gender or age-specific, which has continued to be reflected by membership and studentship of the organisation.
4.3.4 Venues

Coburg Library provided a meeting room for the original committee, shifting between the small room which was to become the library manager’s office, the large downstairs study room and settling for many years in an upstairs room accessed only through the staff room. Although this room had no emergency exit, no window, no cooling and little heating, it was initially thought very suitable as it was cost-free and had space for three tables, 10 chairs, a telephone and a portable divider with a desk for the part-time co-ordinator.

4.3.5 Initial funding

In correspondence dated 1983, the fledgling organisation applied to the Committee on Voluntary Adult Learning Groups (VALG) requesting an initial funding of $500 for resources to support the establishment of a Coburg group. This was justified because ten members of the Preston voluntary group were from the Coburg area (Munro, 1983). These tutors were already matched and met locally with residents, attesting to a demand. As Coburg was central for the Brunswick and Fawkner residents, a gap was seen as occurring in the areas surrounded by Carlton, Preston and Glenroy. The scheme was also supported by the head librarian, whose letter to the Coburg Council (29th August, 1983) requested permission to allocate “the small group study room” for a literacy program based in Coburg Library (Anderson, 1983, p. 2). Following this successful application, a second submission was made to the VALG for a grant from the 1983 Adult Learning Project for $3,000 commencing on March 1984, for payment of a co-ordinator’s salary. The role was meant to train and support the existing 15 tutors delivering a total of 4500 hrs (that is, student contact hours, known as SCH) (CALG, 1984e). This application resulted in a cheque for $2,000 from the Committee of VALG with a letter requesting a project evaluation
and a financial statement of expenditure signed by the treasurer and secretary to be submitted at the end of the project. (Loftus, 1984)

A TAFE Board Circular of 13th July 1984 advertised Commonwealth Designated Grants funding which contained some categories for which Community organisations could apply although others were targeting the CAE or other coded applications. The circular outlined the priority target categories for ‘special course provision’ funding in adult literacy, migrant/multicultural—sub-grouped as ESL and Education for a multicultural society, other disadvantaged groups (listed as unemployed, women and girls, Aborigines, residents in rural areas, aged, physically disabled, intellectually handicapped, socially isolated, other disadvantaged), and small business.

Other categories were specifically for ‘college services’—such as childcare and curriculum development, quality improvement and management (TAFE, 1984, p.2). However, of particular importance for ACE organisations was the circular’s statement that “regional co-ordination of programs and assistance in the co-ordination of existing adult literacy networks in association with the Victorian Adult Literacy Council is a major priority” (TAFE, 1984, p. 4). Submissions were to be sent to the provider’s nearest Regional TAFE Board office. This application was successful, resulting in the ‘designated TAFE grant’

In August 1984, the CALG made an additional application for the $1,000 not granted previously, offering to train 30 volunteers to deliver 1,500 SCH to 30 students (CALG, 1984c). This application also made reference to the sex of both the tutors and the participants as 50% each, the first indication that this program went against the commonly low inclusion rate for males.
In 1986, a small funding grant was obtained to run a Road Rules class and a small class for ‘M.I.D Life Skills’ (i.e. basic literacy and life skills for people with mild intellectual disabilities). However, one-to-one literacy tutoring continued as the main activity of the group throughout the 1980s.

In 1985, ACE providers in the Northern Metropolitan region—such as CALA—came directly under the TAFE system. A circular from the TAFE Northern Region’s Board stated “From January 1, 1985 it will be necessary for groups/institutions to be registered as a T.A.F.E. Provider before they are eligible for (1) T.A.F.E. Board administered government funds and (2) approval to conduct accredited T.A.F.E. programs” (Lund, 1984, p.1).

At this time, statistical data was also to be reported to the Northern Metropolitan Regional Board of TAFE at 14 Hopkins St, Greensborough in the eastern corridor of the northern suburbs of Melbourne. This office was provided for ‘peppercorn rent’ negotiated by the northern metropolitan chairperson, MLA Gordon Bryant, the sitting member for Wills, who also attended a meeting at CALA in 1985 in support of the program (CALA, 1985b). The funding for the co-ordinator’s salary, however, while paid from this office, was auspiced by the CAE’s financial department as voluntary committees of management were assumed not to have the knowledge or capacity to undertake payrolling.

For the first ten years of the organisation’s existence, it paid no rent and no power or telephone as these were paid from the library’s council funding. The only assets owned by CALA in 1985 were a large desk, a metal cabinet, a few textbooks and a typewriter.
In late 1988, the government formed a Division of the Ministry of Education with responsibility for further education, administered through eleven regional offices established throughout the state. The northern metropolitan region covered eleven municipalities in a triangle encompassing “Brunswick to Macedon to Kinglake” (Tatchell, 1989, p. 1).

Each metropolitan council was to have a broadly representative membership of twelve drawn from Further Education providers, TAFE colleges, Local Government, Skillshare “and aboriginal, ethnic and adult literacy communities” (Tatchell, 1989, pp. 1-2).

Tatchell’s letter was the first in the northern metropolitan region, which recognized ACE as distinct from TAFE, and also—somewhat ironically—previewed the prospective membership of the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) of 2000.

Accountability for the funding received was almost non-existent apart from the annual financial audit arranged by the Committee. The first A3 sized form requested details of students with organisational and class information (TAFE, undated). Students were not identified, with only the first four letters of the surname being used.

The organisation’s incoming funding during its formative years was all supplied by the Victorian state government itself, or through its administering Commonwealth funds known as the Commonwealth Adult Literacy Program. The organisation received no direct funding from the local council although because of its position in the Library, participants and local residents always assumed it was a local government initiative.
Table 4.6 Initial MAE Income (CALA, 1985a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>1983</th>
<th>1984-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VALG</td>
<td>500.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designated TAFE Grant</td>
<td>9,420.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recurrent Grant (CALP)</td>
<td>1,600.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Development ‘O&amp;TC’</td>
<td>580.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest and Reimbursements</td>
<td>316.44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
<td><strong>500.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,916.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reality of financial support should be acknowledged by inclusion of an estimation of the hidden costs of running a voluntary organisation.

Table 4.7 In-kind Support and Voluntary Labour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>1983</th>
<th>1984-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>2,400.00</td>
<td>2,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated in-kind for room, power, phone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers labour: 30/35 x 2 hrs wk x 40 wks @ $24 hr (tutoring).</td>
<td>57,600.00</td>
<td>67,200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total in-kind Costs</strong></td>
<td><strong>$60,000.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>$69,700.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although ACE always offered a cheap alternative for both state and national government funding and also for participant-fee aspects, the reality is that the actual costs of delivery were substantial and largely provided by local government support and community goodwill. Without these in-kind supports, ACE’s sustainability was not secure during its developmental stages and has continued to be insecure.

4.3.6 Initiatives

During the years prior to 1995, a number of initiatives were documented in the minutes and reports of the organisation. It gained $9,000 in funding from the
Northern Regional TAFE Board to employ a part-time co-ordinator under TAFE employment conditions (*Terms and conditions of appointment for co-ordinators of TAFE community provider groups*, 1985). As the organisation had no facilities to pay salaries, the CAE was asked to payroll this position which was for 516 hours per annum. (Zeunert, 1985). The co-ordination position was covered by the new Adult Education (PACCT) staff salary award rates granted by the Industrial Relations Commission on 20th December 1988. (Godfrey, 1988). Coburg’s co-ordination had gained a “priority rating of current D.G. [Designated Grants] funded projects” along with the Glenroy program, receiving equal amounts to the region itself of $13,000 (Stewart, 1987, p. 1).

The organisation began offering courses in a range of venues from Fawkner in the north, Glenroy in the far west, Brunswick in the west and south and East Coburg, which became a feature of the organisation. Wherever a group formed with an interest in learning reading and writing—and later, English—the CALA teachers transferred their materials between venues. Apart from the main organisational venues in Coburg Library, these venues over the years included: Fawner, Brunswick, Glenroy and Campbell Turnbull (West Brunswick) Libraries, St Ambrose and St Margaret Mary’s Catholic parish schools, North West Learning Exchange, Melbourne City Mission, Nicholson Street, Reynard Street, Sussex Street, Brunswick and Newlands community centres and the Australian Lebanese Assoc.

Working in multiple venues without facilities meant additional expense, as each venue required tea-making equipment, portable whiteboard and usually portable audiotape players and television/video sets, as well as class sets of dictionaries and storage cabinets. These classes were only conducted by paid staff, who often worked
under disjoined and difficult circumstances without reference texts or convenient copying equipment.

As a result of a tender to the Department of Employment, Education and Training, the program gaining funding for a Special Intervention Program (SIP)—Language and Literacy Assistance project. As it included payment for individual literacy assessments which were completed at the Coburg CES at a cost of $60, this gave the organisation sufficient funds to purchase its first major pieces of equipment and other resources.

4.3.7 Publications and Stories

These formative years of CALA were the most prolific in terms of production of internally published magazines. Although it was the period when self-reflective and practical writing, such as form-filling, were the priorities of most literacy teaching before the introduction of the accredited adult Certificate in General Education, many personal stories were recorded. Writing for group and organisation-wide booklets and magazines was one of the most compelling reasons to create a writing ‘habit’ in a student. As well as the annual Christmas magazines, magazines such as ‘Seed Pearls’, ‘Wonder Womyn 1 & 2’, ‘Tuesday Knighters’, ‘Selected Writings by the Thursday Morning Group’, ‘VCE Magazine’ and ‘Broken Blossoms’ are typical of the output from groups of literacy students from beginner level through to VCE English levels 1 and 2.

Students at the organisation were also active participants in a local publication which was funded in 1992 by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (Atkinson & McFarlane, 1992). Having their stories appear in a wider publication
validated not only their literacy skills, but enhanced self-esteem and often appeared to fulfil the cathartic needs of group confessions.

Box 4.8: Excerpts from Students’ Stories in *Caring Concerns* (1992)

| “There is always fear in my county, Afghanistan. …My husband, a lecturer, was killed by the regime” (p.16) |
| “I attempted suicide, an overdose. I was in intensive care for four days” (p.79) |
| “My Dad was always touching me and my girlfriends on the breasts” (p.78) |
| “When I first noticed that my husband was becoming forgetful and vague, some three years ago, I thought it was his age...He was admitted and diagnosed as having dementia” (p.114) |

Publication of these first-person stories validated those which had appeared in the organisational magazines. The story-telling—in this case written, but frequently verbal narratives—encompassed a wide diversity of ages and cultures and fulfilled many personal, familial and cultural desires for self-expression beyond those of learning language and literacy. Often, the stakeholders expressed the relief of uncritical support and the cathartic satisfaction of sharing even the most personal of stories.

4.3.8 Assessment and placement

One major change during the ten year research period was the increasing enrolment of students with lower levels of spoken English. In the jargon of the period, this was known as a shift from native-speakers, MIDs and high oracy/low literacy NESB to either ESL-literacy or fast-track ESL. While these generalizations were often deplored by practitioners, they introduced new means of communicating literacy and language levels and needs between organisations and teachers,
necessitated by a largely casual predominantly female workforce without paid staff meetings.

Staff members at MAE were expected to assess incoming students for placement as either one-to-one students working with a voluntary, internally-trained tutor, or with a paid classroom teacher.

Table 4.8 Assessment Wall Chart, 1985 (MAE, 1983-1985)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Literacy Level</th>
<th>Speaking/Listening</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MID (Mild Intellectual Disability)</td>
<td>Pre or Low</td>
<td>Low or Mid</td>
<td>May need supervision at all times (drop off &amp; pick up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native-speaker</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High—often very articulate</td>
<td>Low self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NESB</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High—often limited vocabulary</td>
<td>Often low confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL-Literacy</td>
<td>Low in English and First language</td>
<td>Low-medium</td>
<td>Can be any—depending on employment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast-track ESL</td>
<td>High in First Language. Usually Low in English</td>
<td>Often low</td>
<td>Confident—able to use dictionaries etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These categories were commonly used by funding bodies and within TAFEs as well as ACE organisations emphasising the similarities between the students enrolled in the different sectors and the shared teaching of the staff. Many staff members had historically moved between the sectors due to shifts in funding and successful tenders, life-changes and the convenience of casual hours combined with parenting.

By the early nineties, these assessments had been superseded by kits such as the NSW AMES text Literacy assessment tasks for placement and referral (Navarra, 1992) and the one initially preferred and predominately used at Coburg the Assessment, referral and placement kit for adult literacy and basic education programs in Victoria (Purdey, 1992). This was because it concentrated on the lower levels of literacy skills, was user-friendly—especially for part-time workers often
working in unpaid time—and because the writer had demonstrated a great deal of
knowledge of northern suburbs students at various ACFE workshops. Because the
Navarra kit was published by the NSW AMES, it was felt to be targeting new
migrants rather than English-speaking literacy students. Purdey’s tasks, however,
emphasised both the development of self-esteem and had local—rather than
interstate—content. For example, Navarra’s stage 3 reading task was a gas bill
specifically using Sydney addresses and a toll free Sydney number, (Navarra, 1992)
(Reading 3, p. 16) and yellow pages tasks referred to finding NSW numbers
(Navarra, 1992) (Reading 2, p.14) . Students with low literacy levels were unable to
make the transfer of their minimal knowledge of the task, whereas Purdey’s Victorian
content gave students a familiar model from which to work.

4.3.9 Main Formative Influences Pre-1994

During 1991-1992, four government-funded reports were published which had
considerable influence on the ACE sector. These were—chronologically—the Finn,
‘Come in, Cinderella’, Carmichael and Mayer reports. To understand how
organisations such as MAE came to deliver accredited courses and integrate
vocational education, a brief over-view of the Finn, Carmichael and Mayer reports
provides an underpinning to the organisation’s strategic planning during the early
nineties.

**Finn**

Specifically addressing the needs of youth, the Finn Report of July, 1991
proposed that general and vocational education were likely to converge, and that
young people would need to be “multi-skilled, creative and adaptable” (Finn, 1991,
p. ix) to be successful in employment. The report claimed that both schools and
vocational education would need to adapt, the former by emphasising vocational
outcomes, the latter by recognising a wider competency-base than concentrating on craft and trade skills.

Finn’s report recommended new targets for post-compulsory education whereby all 18 year olds were to possess either a level 1 traineeship or year 12 by 1995, almost all 20 year olds were to have a level 2 or be progressing toward a higher vocational or academic qualification by 2001, and possess a level 3 qualification or progress toward a diploma or degree for all 22 year olds by 2001. These targets were summarised as, by the year 2001, 95% of 19 year olds should have year 12 level or be engaged in training or education (Finn, 1991, pp. ix-x). One of the committee’s main recommendations included essential competence in: Language and Communication, Mathematics, Scientific and Technological Understanding, Cultural Understanding, Problem Solving and Personal and Interpersonal skills (Finn, 1991, p.xvii).

This concept of broadening competencies had originally been proposed by the Karmel report, which emphasised “the acquisition of skills and knowledge, initiation into the cultural heritage, the valuing of rationality and the broadening of opportunities to respond to and participate in artistic endeavours” (Karmel, 1973) (p.14) and led to a huge increase in Commonwealth funding—$364 million to nearly $1.1 billion in 2 years (Marginson, 1997, p. 46).

However, the development of the Australian competencies occurred with a range of overseas equivalents such as the British General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) and the ‘America 2000’ known as the 1991 ‘Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills’ (SCANS). (What work requires of schools-A SCANS report for America 2000, 1991), which advocated three foundation areas: basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities. These three unpinned the
competencies of resources, information, interpersonal systems and technology. Finn’s report expanded these to those listed above and advocated concepts such as pathways, recognition of prior learning and life-long learning which were to have considerable impact on the ACE sector as well as TAFE vocational education. (Finn, 1991, p. 13).

The impact of the Finn report was contained in the strategic plan documented at a meeting in 1992, where the general business revolved around the possibility of targeting youth in VCE and SIP classes (CALA, 1992). Although it was considered impractical to conduct a youth-specific group in the main venue—Coburg Library—because of an existing and historical problem dealing with difficult students from the local secondary school out of school hours, they endorsed integrating young people into existing courses.

**Carmichael**

The Finn Report was produced the year before the Carmichael Report which links the two in their influence on all sectors of education, and this link is evidenced in the statement the new training system “builds on the ‘Finn Committee’ report” in the foreword of the Carmichael document. (Carmichael, 1992, p. v). The second report was written for the Employment and Skills Formation Council and recommended that a competency-based Australian Vocational Certificate Training System be implemented. Again this report emphasised pathways which included RPL and credit transfer to higher levels of competence and endorsed the Finn targets of education and training. Although it advocated that TAFE institutes developed a focus on advanced vocational training up to Diploma level, for the first time community providers were specifically mentioned as part of an integrated network of training
The place of ACE providers was limited to provision of “re-entry programs for early school leavers and homeless and jobless young people” (Carmichael, 1992, p. 5).

Although the report was heavily weighted toward industrial and youth-employment issues, it referred to women suffering a high level of alienation from vocational training, and recognised the difficulties of incorporating the diversity of Australia’s VET providers, including ACE providers.

For MAE, the publication of the Carmichael report led directly to its commitment to pay for two staff members to attend training in Recognition of Prior Learning in the following years’ budget (the manager and one teacher) and an interest in applying to conduct VCE subjects. Only Diamond Valley Learning Centre—one of the largest providers in the northern metropolitan region—had delivered VCE. Part of this commitment included allocating sufficient funding to conduct a preparatory VCE course for a diverse group of predominantly female students aged between 21 and 60 years in 1992 (CALA, 1993a). Although the original intention was based on the recommendations of Finn and Carmichael, the youth cohort did not eventuate for the VCE subjects.

Although it was 1994 before ACFE funded the VCE project at Moreland, accreditation through the then Victorian Board of Studies (later VCAA) was accepted in 1994 as Diamond Valley Learning Centre had undertaken the record-keeping and statistical reporting to the Board of Studies for the first two years of delivery.
Mayer

Following the Finn and Carmichael reports, the Mayer report in 1992 advocated generic definitions of competency which link skills and knowledge with wider qualities. The Mayer Key Competencies—which were on an MAE wall chart for many years—are listed as: Collecting, analysing and organising information; Communicating ideas and information; Planning and organising activities; Working with others and in teams; Using mathematical ideas and techniques; Solving problems and Using technology (Mayer, 1992).

An eighth competency, known as ‘Appreciation of culture’ (ACFEB, 1995) was removed from the original list, but was retained in the accredited Victorian CGEA as an alternate competency. For MAE, the influence of the Mayer competencies was introduced almost immediately through the CGEA which ACFE accredited for the organisation following the publication of the original curriculum document, and after regional professional development.

National Policy for ACE

However, one of the greatest external influences on the Victorian ACE sector of 1994 was the implementation of the 1993 National Policy for ACE, which was the major topic of the VALBEC conference held at Deakin University in July 1993, where many practitioners were confronted by the first indicators of change. For most ACE practitioners, the annual VALBEC conferences were the only opportunity available at the time to feel part of an educational sector.

The 1993 conference was to predict the future changes in the subsequent 10 years of ACE with remarkable clarity, beginning with the opening address by Peter Kirby—later to become the ACFE chairperson and introduce the influential ‘Kirby

It also both perpetuated the ESL/ALBE duality which created both controversy and hostility—but also subverted it by arranging not one, but two keynote speakers: Mary Kalantzis (who most practitioners related to the AMES/ESL sector and workplace initiatives due to her position in the Workplace Centre at Sydney’s University of Technology) and Delia Bradshaw (a long-term ALBE teacher and subsequent writer of the influential Conceptual Framework for Further Education).

Future alterations to the existing ACE situation were predicted in a keynote address by Mary Kalantzis. Kalantzis’s contentions, reported in the Fine Print journal (Pobega, 1993, pp. 4-8) can be summarised as follows. Firstly, that the changes from historic, deductive forms of reasoning and knowledge had become the prevailing, post-modern concept of ‘voice’ expressed through inductive forms of reasoning and individual self-expression. Secondly, that a simultaneous fear of unemployment (quoted at 11-12% for adults and 30% for youth—the highest and most sustained levels for any OECD country) was creating demand for the previous aspirations of traditional learning. Thirdly, that the subsequent tension was causing fragmentation of delivering pedagogy and curriculum.

For Kalantzis this duality created a dangerous shift to national standardization, with re-emphasis on testing and implementation of Competencies, and diminished the prevailing policies of diversity, multiculturalism, and the emphasis placed in adult education on the subjective individual. At the same time, Kalantzis questioned the long-held practice in ACE centres of concentrating almost single-mindedly on self-expression, arguing that this form of learning also alienated the individual from those very forms of learning which would have promoted employment. This latter was
particularly criticized in relation to NESB learners—although this may have been more indicative of Kalantzis’s interest in ESL teaching than in her knowledge of the learning conducted in ALBE classes with a higher focus on literacy.

Kalantzis questioned the current trend toward creating a polarity of systemic linguistics advocating a critical pedagogy which empowered individuals to understand the dominant culture, and genre approaches, which affirmed rather than challenged governments, bureaucracies and dominant social discourses.

She advocated a new approach which recognized a range of multicultural pedagogies supporting the ACTRAC project being undertaken by Sharon Coates which was to lead to the Interim Literacy Course Matrix (McKenna, 1998).

Delia Bradshaw, the second keynote speaker, was for many attending “the highlight of the VALBEC Conference” (Daly & Archer, 1993, p.9). With her list of ‘signposts’ to the future, Bradshaw effectively predicted most of the terminology and changes which were to occur between 1994 and 2004. These included: skill formation; observable, measurable outcomes; stand-alone, self-access packages; competency-based training; competitive tendering; the cheapest student contact hour; and sessionally contracted, highly mobile staff.

### 4.3.10 Organisational Overview

The early years of MAE can be characterised by six main defining qualities beginning with its annual, incremental increase in government funding through ACFE, its continued reliance on volunteer support and labour, its strong links with charitableness and the steady rise in numbers of students whose first languages were not English. The other factors included its reliance on local government in-kind support for a venue and utilities and the continued emphasis on teaching ALBE and ESL.
During the pre-1994 years, the organisation built funding income and numbers. The venue, funding sources, reliance on volunteers and composition of staff and committee of management, however, tended to remain the same as during the pre-1985 formative period.

An overview of this period of CALA revealed that it maintained a deep involvement in the more social aspects of a community group. This was clearly indicated by general business entries in the minutes of committee meetings, for example during the 1992-1993 period which referred to: a party with a door prize (12-11-2002), VCE lunch and planning for a Christmas party (22-10-1992), Christmas break-up planning (10-8-1993) and employing a Father Christmas (26-11-1993). During this time, volunteer training and meetings featured repetitively, indicating the organisation’s maintained reliance on voluntary labour. These entries were typical of most organisations, but given that the organisation’s existence was for education, there were few corresponding references to anything related to learning and education.

4.4 MAE: 1994-1995

For the purposes of this study, the years around 1994 are being used as the pivotal years for the organisation. The reason that this period is expressed as crossing two years was that it had to account for finances and taxation by the financial year and academic statistics were reported by the academic year. 1994 was both the year when a significant number of changes were implemented, and in 1995 a number of other alterations were initiated which were to impact heavily on ACE organisations, especially in relation to reporting, technology and business systems.
In 1994, the organisation changed its name twice through the Corporate Affairs Commission. For a brief few months it became Coburg Adult Education Assoc. This was to recognise the shift from delivery of literacy to ESL and VCE. Secondly, it was renamed as Moreland Adult Education Assoc. to reflect the changes caused by local government amalgamations, recognise that the new MAE delivered classes in Brunswick and Fawkner as well as Coburg, and to pre-empt other organisations using that name. This decision was a serious one for the committee because of the defining nature of a location for an ACE organisation, but was felt necessary as the organisation periodically out-posted classes to Brunswick, West Brunswick, East Coburg and Fawkner, which were all parts of the newly created local government area of Moreland.

4.4.1 MAE Business Plan and Mission

One of the major indicators of professional business practices which were to become expected of community-based providers was the business plan. The organisation’s Business Plan for 1994 listed the following ten targets for the year:

“1. Target local, regional and State priority groups: ESL, NESB, Clients with Disabilities, Women without Qualifications, Aged and Unemployed both as students and staff.
2. Accreditation of CGE(A).
3. Accreditation of, and curriculum development for, three VCE classes.
4. Tender to DEET.
5. Computerisation of all finances and salaries.
6. Regular staff meetings for all.
7. Maintenance of up to 20 trained volunteers.
8. Contain SCH cost to under $5.00, keeping Coburg the most economically viable of equivalent regional programs.
9. Develop a network of possible alternate venues.
10. Improve physical work environment for staff.” (MAE, 1994, p. 6)
In early 1994, there was a documented mission statement which read:

“Coburg Adult Literacy aims to offer personal empowerment and increased employment opportunities through negotiated educational pathways, by addressing state, regional, local and social justice priorities.” (CALA, 1994, p. 6).

By late 1994, this had been changed to include a much more inclusive ‘Statement of Future Intention’:

“Future directions of the organisation (given the tenuous nature of funding and uncertainty about council amalgamations):

The organisation intends to pursue its originally defined goals of offering a high quality of educational courses to the adult people of Coburg and the surrounding areas.

To accomplish this aim, and fulfil a relevant role in a culturally diverse and economically disadvantaged area, the organisation particularly targets clients identified by social justice policies, including NESB and Special Needs students, Women without Qualifications, Corrections clients and the Unemployed” (Coburg Adult Education Assoc.:1994-95, 1994, Appendix p. 24).

This statement accorded with the organisation’s continued emphasis on addressing the core values of its committee and staff.

However, the minutes of meetings during 1994 give an excellent overview of the interests and operations of the program (Appendix 1.I). These minutes provided a real insight into the working of the MAE committee and—despite the committee training received throughout the year from ACFE—its functions were perceived as
being largely recreational and decision-making was operational rather than planning and governance.

### 4.4.2 Operational Monitoring

1994 was the first year that MAE had computerised systems for financial records. The financial system was designed by the IT support worker in MS Excel and included over 50 pages of formulae which produced 10 page reports based on simple income and expenditure columns for each source of funding. During its early years, the organisation used the series of lined books produced and sold at retail outlets for small business accounting.

All statistical reporting had taken place on A3 sized papers which were submitted annually before 1994 when ACFE had conducted workshops explaining the use of the two existing software systems for ACE organisations: Sericon’s Nrolls and CAS Omnia. \((OTTE: Training providers-review of student management software, 2001)\). In 1994, MAE purchased and installed Nrolls which was used for reporting student statistics and student contact hour delivery.

In conjunction with a range of computer software, a new form of evaluating classes was introduced. Until 1994, although rolls had been kept since courses had been introduced, internal reporting on classes had been verbal either at staff meetings or one-to-one in meetings with the co-ordinator. For the first time, formalised, documented accountability commenced introducing attendance and completion rates as a means of monitoring and evaluating success for continued funding. This form required a range of information on the teacher’s qualifications and experience, details of the student profile and the following table which not only showed the level all
students were expected to achieve, but the numbers exiting. This was the first instance of the recording of a retention rate for a class.

Table 4.9 Reproduced from Coburg Adult Education Assoc. ("Course evaluation form," 1994, p.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Class</th>
<th>ILCM</th>
<th>VCE</th>
<th>Possible Maximum</th>
<th>Av. Attendance</th>
<th>Number lost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Literacy</td>
<td>Exit 1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL/Literacy 1/2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL/Literacy 1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.I.D s Dev 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-VCE Exit 2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The accountability form finished with a section evaluating the success of pathways, and any stories or ‘recounts’ of successes or highlights, in an attempt to balance teachers’ concerns about being asked to report quantitative, but not qualitative, outcomes.

The second page of this document also included a request for a report of any problems faced and the strategies used to overcome them, and a question to elicit a list of the teacher’s participation in professional development, especially for CGEA ("Course evaluation form," 1994, p. 2). This was the first instance of the movement toward expecting ACE teachers to keep their skills current.

4.4.3 Pathways and Placement

The organisation also had a chart to demonstrate both its commitment to pathways for funding bodies and to use for showing students the possibilities of advancement into and beyond the organisation. The chart was based on the main
means used to assess participants for reading and writing levels, known as the 1992 Interim Literacy Course Matrix (ILCM) (McKenna, 1998, p. 3).

Despite a high level of people from other language-groups, the Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating (ASLPR—later to become the International SLPR) was not used to assess participants at CALA in 1994 not only because of the organisation’s origins in literacy teaching, but also as funding for ESL was low because of the assumption that recent migrants would only attend the AMES classes. In an effort to have national assessment standards, both ILCM and ASLPR were intended to be subsumed into firstly the ACTRAC National Adult English Language and Literacy Competence Framework in 1993 then the National Reporting System in 1995 (McKenna, 1998, pp. 3-7). For small organisations, the constant proposals of new assessment systems such as the DEETYA Alan Scales (Griffin & Foreward, 1991), was extremely confusing, and many, like Moreland, stayed with those either demanded by funding bodies, or equated to the courses they were delivering. This was best exemplified by the CGEA levels which quickly became the means of sharing assessments for referrals across teachers or organisations, while the ASLPR was retained for occasional organisational referrals.

However, 1994 saw the introduction of the kit which updated Purdey’s and was to be used for many years to assess adult students. An assessment guide for adult basic education programs in Victoria (Lyons, 1994), was both pertinent to Victorians and aimed at “the need to provide placement assessment reports for the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) clients” (Lyons, 1994, p. i).

With the funding for the DEET SIP Literacy classes and one-to-one students, the organisation had to adhere to the regional directives for conducting assessments, placements and referral for the CES. These guidelines specified a long procedure—
four pages—for ACE organisations conducting the service although the successful ACE tenderers listed by DEET included those also delivering ESL (plus nine TAFEs or other providers) (Gathercole, 1994, p. 10).

The CES assessments were attached to Newstart activity agreements with an expectation that documentation would be completed against an Adult Literacy/Numeracy initial assessment report based on the Commonwealth Adult Literacy Program which were both based on the ILCM. ("Guidelines for the assessment, referral and placement of CES clients in adult basic education courses," 1994)

With the accreditation of the CGEA, the Lyons kit was most applicable to Moreland students as it was written in competency-based language and tasks cross-referenced directly into the eight elements and four levels of the CGEA which, in 1994, had four streams: reading and writing, numerical and mathematical concepts, oral communication and general curriculum options at four levels. The modules for reading and writing were: self-expression, practical purposes, knowledge and public debate. The Lyons kit contained a range of ‘masters’ for record-keeping and using as assessment tasks for entry, on-going and exit assessments, suggested tasks and an appendix which contained both the ILCM and the ASLPR scales.

Although the CGEA had been developed in 1992, and teachers in ACE organisations had undergone a series of training workshops for professional development funded by ACFE in 1993, it was fully implemented at MAE at the start of 1994. Committee minutes refer to having all teachers trained in delivery (CALA, 1993b) and the purchase of individual copies of the curriculum document for each teacher, when it was realised they needed to plan work and undertake record-keeping at home because there was no staff work area at MAE (CALA, 1993c).
4.4.4 Committee composition

Unlike the spasmodic record-keeping of the first years of its existence, since the early 1990’s, there had been statistical reports and lists of staff, committee members and volunteers to use for research.

However, the participants in the new MAE showed small—rather than large—changes in composition since the meetings with the inaugural members, reflecting some inclusion of people with first language other-than-English, although only one of ten paid staff had been born overseas. This was despite the fact that 49.8% of residents in Coburg spoke a language other-than English at home (MAE, 1994, p. 19).

4.4.5 Stakeholders 1994: Birthplace

The documentation of people’s cultural and linguistic origins was always problematic. This was particularly evident in the 1994 documentation where an interpretation by the person involved was evident and the terminology used by the funding bodies and organisations was not consistent. A typical scenario follows: A young man born in Turkey spoke only Turkish until aged five or six, by which time his family had migrated to Australia. He started school, completed year 11 or 12 then presented at an ACE centre. If the enrolment form specified place of birth, he became Turkish with an assumed first language of Turkish. If the enrolment form specified ‘language spoken at home’ the answer was Turkish. If the form requested nationality, however, he wrote Australian, which was recorded in the statistical data, with the assumed language as English. Although more recent records have clarified this confusion, earlier data such as the following has to be assumed to be accurate because that was how it was reported. If an assessor or teacher assisted in the form-filling, there was possibly an additional version.
While this is true for any form-filling which was open to a person’s interpretation—or re-interpretation to a story of choice—for example, of age or marital status, the cultural/language data was particularly confusing for participants.

Figure 4.9 demonstrates how, although the composition of the student body had changed dramatically since the organisation’s inception, staff, committee and volunteers had not become as inclusive of diversity.

![Bar chart](image)

**Figure 4.9.** Stakeholders 1994: Languages based on birth as reported (CALA, 1993-1994)

*Note: Small numbers in the centre of the chart are ‘other English-speakers’*

### 4.4.6 Stakeholders 1994: Ages and Sex

The ages of students were reported to ACFE by the year of birth. Staff had dates of birth on their taxation employment forms, and most dates of birth for volunteers and committee were recorded—although the birth dates of three voluntary committee members have been estimated as 61+ as they were retirees.
A review of the data available on the sex of the participants showed that there continued to be a comparatively high proportion of males engaged in the organisation. While the main contributing factor continued to be MAE’s placement in the library and acceptance of Corrections clients on early-parole, the addition of the government-funded literacy project for the unemployed kept the high male ratio.
To maintain funding under ACFE, ACE organizations were expected to maintain a high percentage of what were the current target groups. Given that students could fall into multiple categories, the following table gives a clear indication that MAE achieved those targets in sufficient numbers to ensure an increase in funding.

Factors which reflect the attitudes in which the chart was written include that married women were not considered either unemployed or in employment, there is no actually definition of ‘qualifications’, and the NESB refers equally to recent and long-term migrants and to adults who were born in Australia of migrant parents.

Table 4.10 Stakeholders 1994: Participation and Access for Semester 1, 1994
CALA, 1994, p. 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-English Speaking Background</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women without Qualifications</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Unemployed</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In employment</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with Disabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatric</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged/Retired</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: A note was appended to point out that there was no total as some people were in 2 categories.*

4.4.7 Funding

By 1994, the organisation had increased its finances substantially. At a Special Meeting of the committee, the financial year of MAE was altered to an academic year to facilitate ease of reporting to educational funding bodies (CALA, 1993d). This meant that 1994 was the first year when the financial audit was January to December. Although that move solved the problem of accountability to ACFE, for taxation purposes, salaries and salary-related accounting were conducted according to the
financial year. While this may apply to all educational organizations, for small ACE providers it meant each year had (and has) six-monthly record preparation and the additional cost of paying external auditors to prepare statements for half of two financial years plus a single academic year (or the reverse).

The following table is included to demonstrate the levels of funding needed to sustain a program in 1994.

Table 4.11 Income and Expenditure for 1994  (Turville, 1994)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACFE-Commonwealth Growth Funds</td>
<td>8,885.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANTA</td>
<td>28,803.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEET</td>
<td>8,231.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACFE Projects</td>
<td>24,083.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACFE-State Recurrent</td>
<td>62,476.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Works and Services</td>
<td>918.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Interest</td>
<td>2,385.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
<td><strong>133,874.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries and Oncosts</td>
<td>99,092.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultants</td>
<td>5,244.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overheads</td>
<td>10,580.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupancy</td>
<td>750.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit</td>
<td>200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>4,550.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>3,126.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designated sum—audit &amp; owing</td>
<td>2,383.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenditure</strong></td>
<td><strong>125,925.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Excess of Income over Expenditure**  7,949.00

Despite an apparent excess of $7,949.00 for 1994, there was no provision made for long-service leave, sick leave or holiday pay, and no asset register or depreciation. Effectively, these additional amounts would have meant the organisation was running at a loss.
4.5 Concluding Comment

The formative years of the organisation can best be described through the characteristics of the personnel involved: an almost totally Anglo-Celtic committee and volunteers with links to local churches, plus a student-body of predominantly literacy students comprised of either English-speakers, or young adults schooled in Australia. With limited amounts of funding accessed from state government projects, the program relied almost totally on internally-trained volunteers who were matched with individual students.

Box 4.9: Change and Dissipation in ACE

“Because I arrived in Victoria in 1984. And my personal views are that as a member of a community, as a citizen, I should put things back into the community in which I live. And so set out systematically to work out how to do that. … I thought there was a huge shift between’84 and ’95 say, or ’96, when—just after the legislation was first introduced into the State parliament. There was a—it was both a vibrant period within the sector, but many people knew of it, more people knew of it then. I think that’s all been dissipated, and if anything we’ve gone backwards. I think less people know about us now than they did in 1991, when the new legislation came out.”

Mike, lines: 402-417

There was little equipment, few resources—except those borrowed from the library—and a strong emphasis on the empowerment of individuals through the acquisition of literacy.

The MAE of 1994 was a stronger and more professional organisation than during its formative years. Documents showed a settled staff, regular funding payments under the state ‘recurrent’ budget and possession of just enough equipment and assets necessary to support education and training. Immediate and obvious changes included the successful gaining of a Department of Employment, Education and Training tender to deliver the Special Intervention Program (SIP) for ‘Language
and Literacy Assistance’ to unemployed adults (Thomas, 1994). The name-change from Coburg Adult Literacy Association to Coburg Adult Education Assoc.—which was followed later in the year by another change to Moreland Adult Education Assoc. (Registrar, 1994), occurred in 1994, as did improvements to the physical setup through removal of the wall to gain additional floor space of two by three metres and the building of an office partition for the manager (Schultze, 1994).

Although there was still a strong emphasis on the social and charitable aspects of the organisation, the introduction of statistical and financial software, first tentative introduction of course evaluations and more thorough reporting can be detected in a range of documents.

The reduction in the number of volunteer tutors from 27 in 1993 to 19 in 1994 was the first indicator of the increasing emphasis on both qualifications and funding of classes. It also predicted the slow decline in volunteers and the change of reasons for volunteer engagement.

The reports by Finn, Carmichael and Mayer introduced the possibility of major changes such as an emphasis on funding for youth in ACE, and increases and changes to VET delivery. Practitioners’ concerns about the divergence of pedagogies such as systemic linguistics and genre theory, plus the 1999 predictions of Bradshaw, created a perfect introduction to the following period being presented in this research.
5. MORELAND ADULT EDUCATION BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

“Very informal, very friendly. Yeah. Social, community sort of place. ... I get the feeling that it’s more formal now. ... It used to be that the people involved were the most important thing. Now I get the feeling that the outcomes are the most important thing. ... And I think it’s coming from bureaucracy. I don’t think it’s necessarily from the people who are, sort of at the coal face, running it.”

Jane

The initial stages of the development of an ACE organisation proved to be a very decidedly ‘bottom-up’ process which was initiated by local residents in response to a local need and supported by a range of professional people such as the Coburg librarians and a local TAFE co-ordinator. For the following ten years, this led to a slow building of numbers which saw a gradual increase to funding by state-government authorities such as the Victorian Adult Literacy Group (VALG). The years of 1994 and 1995 saw the beginning of changes to the amount of accountability, the introduction of technology and increased delivery to ESL and VCE students which were heavily influenced by the necessity to develop as a business. However, the strong links with volunteers and the charitable intentions of the organisation remained static.

Following on from Chapter 4 which presents research into the development of MAE and its position in the years of 1994, the beginning of this chapter looks at the major influences of the post 1994 years, then uses two projects—‘LearnLinks’ and the Dip FE—that occurred during the 1994-2004 period, to demonstrate variations to funding procedures. Although a percentage of recurrent funding was maintained, these changed the emphasis to the less sustainable project-based grant method. An examination of MAE in the year 2004 and a comparison with the data of 1994 complete this chapter, creating a sense of the organisational changes which had occurred during the years in question.
5.1 Primary Influence

The 1995-96 Annual Report of the Victorian State Training Board was possibly one of the most important influences on ACE in the years immediately after 1995, as it gave a clear indication of changes to government funding, participation and priorities. These priorities for all Victorian adult education and training were drawn from four strategic directions. First, cross sectoral pathways were encouraged by fostering cooperation between schools, TAFE Institutes, private providers and universities. Secondly, the report advocated an increase in flexible delivery, prioritising technology and the Internet through multimedia funding, and support for various communication technologies. Thirdly, this delivery also included developing frameworks for mapping curricula in specialist streams. Fourthly, it introduced competitive tendering with the aim of having 20% of all services tendered by the year 2000.

Additional planning included special targets for ACFE funding relating to cooperation and competition, quality and quantity, consolidation and change, development and diversification plus accountability and autonomy.

The report emphasised a change from activity-reporting to outcome achievement based on six key performance areas related to increased engagement in accreditation with an additional $179 million to be received from national funding through ANTA. An additional clause referred to emphasis on target groups such as Koori education, women achieving equality, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, plus literacy teaching.

These strategies predicted the first real changes which encompassed the ACE sector as well as other vocational training and adult education. (STB, 1995-6)
Compared with the relative simplicity of the reporting and lack of emphasis on reporting-outcomes which had existed previously, this document heralded an increasingly sophisticated approach toward the alternate education sector which is ACE, as it heralded the importance of business development as a factor in the funding process.

5.2 Funded Initiatives

Between 1994 and 2004, there were many economic, educational and social influences at work on the ACE sector. However, they were best exemplified by an influx of additional funding sources. For the purposes of this research, two have been selected to demonstrate how MAE initially participated in and maintained its connection with both beyond the initial period of funding.

These two, the LearnLinks and Dip FE projects, both addressed the goals and the values of MAE because of their support for access and equity students, and because they created tertiary pathways for adult students without traditional entry requirements.

Between them, they encapsulated the status of MAE during the 1994-2004 period, commencing in 1999 with the development of the ‘LearnLinks’ project, a network partnership which was a joint ACFE and tertiary institutes’ pathways project developed by ‘top-down’ funding arrangements open to ACFE-funded applicants.

This section of Chapter 5 documents the implementation, development and problems facing MAE in becoming one of the participants in both of these OTFE-funded (OTTE) flexible learning networks. The projects were described from the perspective of an ACE provider to reinforce the contention that there has been—as Praetz (1997) contended—little research documented on the ACE sector’s
contribution to education. These records of both the LearnLinks and the Dip FE were aetiological, tracing the chronological development of the projects and their first years.

5.2.1 The RMIT Learning Network

MAE received very little preliminary information on the formation of the RMIT Learning Network that was to have a considerable impact on their delivery and infrastructure in the following years. A number of other such networks—e.g. ACEWEB, RuralNet (SWIT), Chisholm’s South Westernport network, and the AMES network also originated at this time (Wheeler, 1999b, p. 19). Most were funded from the Wider Victorian Learning Networks for Vocational Education and Training: Tender Brief No 97/98-101 (CIRCIT, 1998). In semester one, 1998, ACFE providers in the northern metropolitan region received an email from the regional office requesting expressions of interest in joining flexible delivery networks with tertiary institutes (Hughes, 1998, p. 2). This was followed by visit to Moreland in the form of an information session attended by ACFE and MAE personnel.

Subsequently, a detailed application was requested asking to supply details of the organisation’s existing IT setup, and to self-select which tertiary institute the provider preferred. NMIT and RMIT were available in northern metropolitan region while other regions linked with alternatives. MAE applied to be part of the RMIT flexible leaning network. This was primarily because MAE students preferred travelling north-south rather than east-west due to the Sydney Road tram and Upfield train line. (M. Curlewis, 1992, p. 38). It was also due to MAE’s interest in the concurrent Dip FE—of which RMIT was already a project participant. MAE was also keen to link with RMIT because of its reputation as a world-class institute with global links.
These representatives visited to inspect MAE’s setup and to meet with the manager and IT support people. After this meeting, MAE received a “Report on connectivity needs for RMIT learning networks” (Kumm, 1998) which evaluated the IT setup at each of the proposed partners. MAE’s read:

“Moreland currently accesses a permanent ISDN link, and has 10 computers in one classroom available for activities, including those of the Learning Network. They request the allocation of $2,000, which will assist in the cost of provision of a semi-permanent ISDN linkage to the Internet for Learning Network clients” (Kumm, 1998, p. 1).

Each of the participating ACE centres applied for—and received—$2,000 toward supporting their provision. RMIT, in the same document, received $10,301 as their share of what was originally perceived by providers as an equitable partnership.

Figure 5.1 The Learning Network Model, based on an original by L. Wheeler (CIRCIT, 1998) (p.1)
The centres were notified that their applications had been successful and were invited to sign an agreement dated 12/06/1998, and attend a range of meetings to plan the delivery of hours and participation in professional development.

The RMIT Learning Networks Project Agreement documented their position as lead agency and provision of a project manager. It also delineated how the network would liaise with OTFE (OTTE). It listed communication schedules for reporting and evaluating, and profiled how and what OTFE profile delivery would be implemented.

The agreement defined the ACE membership’s agreed participation for phase one to take part in the research and development of a case management kit, attend at professional development, determine IT requirements, identify profile hours, and undertake business planning and monitoring.

Phase two for the network was to create a student evaluation process, enrol and continue planning which was to be completed 30th March, 1999. The third phase was the reporting on student progress and evaluations, to liaise with the disability unit about case management and to work on planning, to be completed by 8th December, 1999 (Wheeler, 1998).

The responsibilities of ACE organisations during phase one revolved around four main areas relating firstly to case management. A case management kit was developed as part of the project. Like many ACE organisations with origins in literacy-delivery, MAE had a long-established case management approach to working with its adult students as exemplified in the 1992 ACFE Project ‘An ALBE to VCE Pathway’ (M. Curlewis, 1992). Despite this, attendance at training was mandatory, because the kit being developed by the Disability Liaison unit was to include materials supplied by ACE centres. The development of the kit became inextricably entangled with the reporting matrix for the Dip FE. (Down, 1999).
The second responsibility was related to professional development with sessions held during late 1998 to prepare ACE providers for online delivery. Qualified IT trainers were given what they felt were patronising sessions including: “Firstly, we don’t worry about the technology. Writing is technology. Books are technology. We are so used to them and skilled with them that we don’t see them as technology any more” and “Programs e.g. Word and Powerpoint are called “Applications”” (Corbel, 1997, pp.1-3).

This was followed by an IT training session on using the TAFEVC (Bevelander, 1998). This training was to subsequently cause a great deal of confusion, as the online units delivered by ACE centres were on the alternate RMIT platform, the DLS (Distributed Learning System), and not the TAFEVC.

The third aspect included the infrastructure requirements and support appropriate for delivery of the materials through the TAFEVC which used a “range of operating systems, network topologies, proxying, firewall systems and hardware” (OTFE, 1999, p. 3).

MAE’s reason for a cautious beginning in delivery—which was the fourth aspect related to ACE centres—related to its student body which was comprised of a very high proportion of CALD, unemployed adults with low capacity to pay the student fees required by RMIT. A number of subjects were later offered through the Business faculty as a Certificate 11 in Information Technology (Computer Applications) (Wheeler, 1999a, p. 1-2), which proved to be the most long-lasting of the courses taken up by MAE students, remaining part of its delivery into 2006.

Initial business planning encompassed a series of strategic planning workshops and the development of a Network Business Plan for 2000 which created a new set of objectives and extended the timelines for achievement until 2002, the end of the
Project funding period. These were mainly in relation to the maximisation of opportunities to broaden the project, its continuation and sustainability. The aims of the planning were predominately to implement, extend and support online delivery (RMIT:LN, 1999, p. 4).

The negotiation of fees was based on a ‘Brokerage Model’ where RMIT charged each student for the $1.31 per SCH which included administrative costs. The ACE centre was expected to enrol each student and forward all details to the department, which would then trigger a bulk account for all fees to the centre. Theoretically, the ACE centre would recoup these fees plus a charge from which they would cover costs. The Learning Network would subsidise the centre for $2.50 per SCH, which, when added to the fees and charges, would potentially leave the centre with a small profit (Wheeler, 2000, pp. 1-4).

This Brokerage model was only suitable for centres heavily subsidised by employment programs. For some centres—such as MAE, NMLL and PRACE, whose programs were heavily weighted with Access and Participation classes—the costing quickly became the main disadvantage to being a member of the network.

An additional financial disadvantage for MAE was because of the concession factor. RMIT charged fees as the Ministerial Directives which stated that vocational students with concession cards were to be charged $1 per SCH plus any materials fees. However, at MAE although this Fees and Charges policy was adhered to in most instances, the organisation had a documented policy which read (and continued to be endorsed annually) “in the case of hardship, all fees and charges may be reduced at the discretion of the manager. Where multiple disadvantaged occur, fees may be reduced exponentially for every factor, even if this results in the non-payment of fees” (MAE, 1999, p. 16).
MAE’s fees and charges policy was developed because of the large number of adult students with multiple claims to disadvantage enrolling in the units (M. Curlewis, 1999a, p. 2). In 1999, MAE had 78% concession or health card holders, making charging at profit-levels impossible (Sericon, 1999). A number of such factors disadvantaged the organisation economically.

MAE also had large number of instances where females were denied language, literacy and computer classes due to cultural gender issues despite the family not being classified as concession. This was particularly noticeable for certain cultural groups where the wives did not know about the family’s finances and it was culturally and financially inappropriate for them to request information relating to income. In addition, because of the large number of MAE students on single-family, low incomes barely above the level to gain a health card, students were not enrolling because of the additional strain on the family income.

These factors meant that MAE’s ability to recover costs were negligible.

Table 5.1 Cost per CGEA module

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit/Module</th>
<th>Nominal SCH per unit</th>
<th>Ministerial Fee</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Admin Cost $1.31</th>
<th>Total owed to RMIT per 13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GCO 1</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>$40.00</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>$41.31</td>
<td>$537.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 Funding Model by RMIT for CGEA Module

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RMIT Payment</th>
<th>MAE to RMIT</th>
<th>Teaching Costs</th>
<th>MAE Loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$2,500.00</td>
<td>$537.00</td>
<td>$31.46 hr x 80 hrs= $2,492.80</td>
<td><strong>$529.83</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where a centre could recover the $40 enrolment fee, it meant a positive balance of $7.20. At MAE, there was a recovery rate of 65% due to the multiple
disadvantages of the students. These figures, however, did not include any overheads (rent, phone, electricity, computer/Internet use) or teaching resources, administration or—most significantly for CGEA delivery—moderation and verification costs.

MAE was left with the additional burdens of providing Internet and download costs, as well as costs of mentoring and support for students struggling with poor technology and unfamiliar delivery modes as well as unknown areas of knowledge.

As MAE was conducting two ‘Work for the Dole’ projects in 1999, the opportunity to offer participants the chance to undertake units which would be accredited by RMIT was initially greeted very enthusiastically by those participants already enrolled in the DipFE.

Because the concept of delivering online was innovative with few guidelines, this first intake of participants at MAE was based solely on self-selection as there were no documented prerequisite skills. It soon became apparent that to study online, the participants already needed IT skills at least at AQF level 11.

Box 5.1: LearnLinks Comments

“I wouldn’t call it an on-line course as such. Because what you do is, you log on to RMIT’s web-site and what you actually get on-line is - you download the lessons and to be able to sort just the lessons on that but then you just print those out and have them by sight. So you’re not actually working on-line, you submit no material on-line back to RMIT.”

“I do remember one thing that J…, who was a student at that time, still jokes about is that one of the subjects, which was ‘Creating a Spreadsheet’, was that we had to create a spreadsheet that did—worked out loan repayments. And coming from a banking background I picked up that all their formulas were incorrect. And I remember then we had to let RMIT know that - ‘hello, you know, these formulas aren’t working, they’re actually incorrect’.”

Ben, lines: 493-497, 478-490

A 2001 performance exercise at MAE concluded that the network was “not financially sustainable in either the short or long term” (M. Curlewis, 2001, p.1) but
it was continued to ensure continuity of employment for a number of staff members although the organisation endorsed the decision not to commence ‘double-dipping’ which would have ensured a profit margin. MAE decided to remain in the partnership for the promised IT infrastructure payment discussed in the early in the project.

LearnLinks organisations were supplied with equipment quotes and asked to nominate what they needed, costing up to $13,500. MAE’s IT support people immediately lodged objections on the grounds that the quotations supplied were too high, could not be upgraded with generic hardware, and the company appeared to be attempting to ‘unload’ high-cost, low capacity equipment on them. “I am curious to see the specs of 5 PCs worth $13,500. We usually buy under the ‘DEET’ schools arrangement and get excellent deals for $1400-$1600 each. I am surprised RMIT doesn’t use this purchasing scheme too” (D. Curlewis, 2002, p. 1). Others included quotations from their local retailers (Goodman, 2002) and correspondence from Employment Focus stated “RMIT/Compaq’s prices are 17.8% higher than comparable equipment from HP which includes 3 year onsite warranty…Local suppliers cost even less” (Fiyalko, 2002, p. 1). Within weeks, the RMIT offer was altered to higher-capacity equipment from alternate suppliers.

Fiyalko of Employment Focus stated: “This method of allocating funding so late in the day after two years of discussion has certainly thrown our planning and expectations out the window…. In our agency’s case we have 15 very stressed training machines, stressed from the volume of work we perform for RMIT at marginal compensation. Any thought that we must take what we can get misses the point….It seems to me that one of the aims in creating this network was to develop a basis for mutual understanding and respect which often has involved everyone stepping outside the square…this is just another hurdle” (Fiyalko, 2002, p.1).
In March 2002, new correspondence was received. In a draft letter from Helen Praetz, setting out the conditions of gaining the IT equipment, a new condition had been added: that any LN organisation receiving the IT equipment was required to sign the agreement to stay in the LN for five years (Praetz, 2002).

This agreement was adjusted to four years after Employment Focus pointed out that after four years, IT equipment was deemed to be worthless and could be removed from an organisational asset register. (Fiyalko, 2002) This agreement contracted participating ACE organisations to the following conditions on acceptance of the $13,500 worth of resources. That the equipment remained the property of RMIT, remaining on its asset register, but the ACE centre maintained the equipment on its asset register for insurance purposes, but with ownership by RMIT flagged. If the centre withdrew from the Learning Network within 12 months, the centre had to return all equipment incurring removal costs. If withdrawing from the network between 2004 and 2006 the centre must either return part (paying for removal), or make a payment for the cost of the equipment as a negotiated rate. If a negotiated rate was not resolved, the amount of repayment was to be dictated by RMIT (Praetz, 2002, p.1).

MAE was having difficulty maintaining its program on the $5.61 per SCH paid by ACFE, and had run at a loss in both 1999 and 2000. The $2.70 offered by RMIT again meant the courses were delivered at a loss, but the organisation could not afford to lose the use of the computers which were being used by approximately 200 concession students who would then have been deprived of access to technology.

By 2005, MAE was still participating in the LearnLinks project despite the financial disadvantages of still receiving $2.70 per SCH which acted as a contribution to costs. RMIT had dropped all expectations of concession students paying fees so
the project’s continuance was based on the organisation’s commitment to ensuring access for its students and the psychological and promotional advantages of being inked to such a large, global institution. There were also the additional positive aspects that it created opportunities for students, and complemented the other project known as the Dip FE pathways program.

5.2.2 Diploma of Further Education

Almost simultaneously to the LearnLinks funding was the introduction of the Victorian alternate category entry course known as the Certificate IV/Diploma of Further Education. Since the pilot project of 1999 and the accreditation of its curriculum document through the ACFE Board, it had been delivered by a small number of Victorian metropolitan and rural TAFE’s, RTO’s and ACE providers. The course was evocative of the ambivalence which characterised the ACE sector as it was a TAFE level course delivered by non-mainstream methodology through negotiated, student-centred mentoring.

Because of the tenuous nature of this course, indicated by providers such as Olympic Adult Education choosing not to continue its delivery, and Nillumbik closing after transferring operations to Diamond Valley—who then also chose to discontinue delivery—documenting, the origins of this course had dual intentions. Tracking Dip FE’s development in the same way as the LearnLinks project demonstrated the post-1994 processes for ACE centres to gain additional funding and also made the research become more outward-looking.

As the majority of ACE centres did not deliver any accredited training at this level, its impact on the composition, dynamics and infrastructure of programs was very decisive in effectively moving parts of the sector into the TAFE areas of delivery. This was due to a number of factors: Firstly, the AQF level of the course
and secondly, although the skills required to deliver the core modules (Reflective Learning and Planning 1A, 1B, 2A and 2B) were within the abilities of community program, they required extensive and expensive resources which were rarely found in ACE organisations with high numbers of access and equity participants, for whom the new course was developed.

In addition, the elective modules were all from selected accredited VET certificates at AQF IV (or above). Few ACE providers had AQF IV or above courses on their scope of registration. Adding courses was expensive because of the registration and process costs, resources, registration and employment of staff to deliver at such a high level. There was also a large amount of time-consuming liaising with TAFE’s and Higher Education personnel and departments, and entry applications and processes—usually through VTAC, ‘Special, or ‘Direct’ categories—which had not been the prerogative of most ACE centres.

While often resisting external pressures to reinvent themselves as TAFEs, in the case of the Dip FE, some providers such as MAE were attracted by the possibility of socially and educationally empowering their students, especially those most alienated from or isolated by, social or familial factors during schooling years.

Reflecting the duality so prevalent in issues relating to ACE, the ‘pressure’ to participate can be seen as originating from both external and internal sources. Firstly from tertiary institutes applying for government tenders based on policies and initiatives such as ‘seamlessness’ and cross-sectoral networking. Secondly, ACFE regional offices were keen to prove their interest and success in provision of pathways, and finally by the ACE organisations themselves wishing to convince regional offices of the efficacy of their delivery. An additional decisive pressure was
applied internally by advanced students within ACE organisations discovering the flexibility of the course and enrolling as a result of their ‘burning to learn’.

In 1997, a series of papers were published as a ‘Review of Melbourne’s TAFEs’, paper six of which referred to Seamless Education and Training. This review defined seamlessness as “the openness of sectors of education and training to individuals from a range of educational backgrounds.” It continued: “A seamless system is one in which each sector, while maintaining its distinctive purposes, has multiple points of entry and recognises both credentialled and uncredentialled learning through appropriate practices” (Teese, 1997, 6.1, p. 1). This definition then expanded to include notions of economic viability, cultural factors, competition, resources, efficiency and equity considerations.

This multi-disciplinary, cross-sectoral and lifelong learning approach successfully encapsulated a range of educational, training and academic goals with the idealistic notion that all institutes, programs and educators have similar visions and access to the trappings of equality. It successfully created a Utopian educational and training vision where all current competencies are given due recognition, all have access to the same facilities and resources, and that empowered individuals have the knowledge, skills and resources—or support—to access this idealised system. The aims, curriculum flexibility, integration of preparatory courses and empowerment through integration of learning technologies which comprise the Dip FE can be said to replicate these goals.

As an Alternate Category Entry scheme and course, the Dip FE was not original in concept as other similar courses, e.g. the Victorian Diploma of Liberal Arts (the ‘Dip LA’), had existed for some time. The most obvious difference between the Dip LA and the Dip FE was that the former particularly targeted students aiming to enter
humanities courses. It was “a broadly based humanities course which covers areas such as literature, history, civics, environmental issues and economics as well communication (including information technology) and study skills” (CAE, 2001, p.1).

The difference between the two accredited courses—and the criteria used by ACE organisations as to implementation—resulted from both the historic perspective and the ideological stance of the organisation. Where the provider had a history of delivering ALBE and its mission/vision or purpose statements related to access and equity implementation, the goals of the Dip FE proved to be both effective and appealing. This applied to both under-financed providers and for the participants without social, educational or financial support.

This vision of empowering individuals was best exemplified by consideration of the dual stances organisations had on adult literacies (Street, 1993). In organisations where the educational stance was based on the assumption of an autonomous model wherein literacy was a cognitive attitude, courses and teaching tended to be devoid of context and this lack of contextual awareness may also have precluded a sense of contextual transferability. This was effectively illustrated by Rosa Wickert’s often-quoted 1989 national survey which clearly demonstrated that 32% of respondents could not identify their gross pay and 31% could not find a Yellow Pages heading (Wickert, 1989). This report inferred that although the group’s levels of reading and writing were assessed at higher levels, participants were unable to transfer their literacy skills into a new context. Where teaching was more instructional and less contextual, it also placed the onus for learning/not learning technical skills and linguistic codes on the individual, leading to victimisation and reaffirming the notions of failure often seen in Dip FE applicants.
The ideological model, however, saw the learning within a context of social practice, and, although it did not deny the need for the former courses/teaching, it placed them within cultural and power structures, emphasising its relationship to ‘critical literacy’. In 1997, Botterill argued that discourses which fail to acknowledge the ideological model of adult literacy acquisition were—despite being highly favoured in mainstream education—actually dysfunctional (Botterill, 1997). This was because they created both pervasive and insidious systems whereby the individual was blamed for not gaining a social level of competence—or transferability of skills—despite adequate exposure to both mainstream and remedial technical and cognitive learning skills. This form of ‘active literacy’ moved away from notions of reading and writing as literacy and incorporated critical thinking and numeracy with the four macro skills.

In populations—such as Moreland’s—with high proportions of residents from a multiplicity of language and cultural groups, choice of course-delivery and entry based on notions of adequacy in the English language, or in courses perpetuating the dominant cultural and bureaucratic structures, were manifestly unsuitable. This dedication to notions of appreciating diversity was—in part—behind the decisions of ACE providers such as MAE to implement the Dip FE over the Dip LA. The ideological model of the former complemented the empowering pathways. The emphasis on skill-acquisition, reading texts and learning of the dominant culture were evaluated at MAE as being too prioritised in the Dip LA for its multicultural participants, and too institutionalised for an organisation which promoted critical literacy.

Thus, the attraction of the Dip FE for MAE was in its commitment to connecting the participant with power structures, supporting them in their acquisition
of skills to master academic bureaucracies and re-implementing the mentoring role as facilitator of the course. Instead of discarding the carefully nurtured preparatory sequences of learning such as CGEA, it integrated and valued them as the initial pathway. It incorporated RPL, introduced AQF levels of vocational training and technology—which tend to be perceived as TAFE prerogatives—and blended them with the negotiated, case managed learning of ACE. Instead of an unfamiliar, structured course based on concepts conflicting with ACE core values, the Dip FE was evaluated by MAE’s stakeholders at all levels, as the one accreditation which integrated and acknowledged the merit of existing delivery—then justified it at AQF levels IV and V.

Its implementation was difficult because it was very expensive to set up and conduct. But most negatively of all, however, and despite the often life-enhancing outcomes for the participants, delivery of the Dip FE created the impression that ACE providers—no matter how efficient and effective—were no more than preparatory centres for mainstream tertiary education. ACE was again effectively forced into a maternal role where terms such as nurturing, fostering and creating, were those designated to its delivery. Dip FE participants were inducted by the ACE provider itself into the very milieu which patronised and belittled the educational delivery which had made the opportunities available to the student. By enthusiastically and successfully creating a tertiary pathway for a Dip FE participant, an ACE centre was colluding to deny the efficacy of its own educational practices.

5.2.2.1 The Pilot Course

In September 1998, the ACFE Board hosted a forum to consider the proposal to join RMIT in developing an accredited course built around Bradshaw’s Conceptual
In October 1998, ACFE-funded providers received notification of a new project which was to be conducted by a consortium of RMIT University, ACFE Northern Metropolitan Region, University of Ballarat, ACFE Central Highlands Wimmera Region, Holmesglen Institute of TAFE and ACFE Eastern Metropolitan regions relating to a proposed alternate entry course. Significantly, the original 1999 guidelines stated categorically that the certificate was to be “an alternative to the adult VCE” (Bateman, 1999, p. 28). However, by the time the course had been fully accredited by ACFE, this contentious phrase had been dropped in favour of the “alternate pathway…for those…unable to equitably participate in other entry mechanisms” (Praetz, 2000, p. 2).

The three ACFE regions were partnered with a most geographically appropriate tertiary institute: RMIT/ACFE Northern, Ballarat/ACFE Central Highlands Wimmera and Holmesglen/ACFE Eastern. The project was intended to offer a means of securing ‘Alternate Category Entry’ for adult students without prerequisite qualifications for tertiary study supported by the three tertiary institutions’ participation in the pilot.

As a limit of two or three organisations were to be accepted in the northern metropolitan region, the regional office staff conducted a further meeting to filter applicants after in June 1999. For the northern metropolitan region, Nillumbik Adult Education Association (formerly Eltham Adult Literacy), Olympic Adult Education (formerly Further Education Collective of Heidelberg) and MAE were the successful applicants—all organisations with a history of successfully delivering ALBE, ESL and the accredited CGEA.
The basic framework of the course, although disguised by random references and alternating vocational and educational language, was pedagogically based on Bradshaw’s Conceptual Framework of Further Education. This made it both effective and efficient to incorporate into an ACE learning situation, despite the flaw that it failed at any time to acknowledge Bradshaw although it quoted her “multiplicity, connectedness, transformation and the development of critical intelligence” (ACFEB, 1999, p. 4).

5.2.2.2 Delivery

Implementation of the pilot project at MAE depicted both the problems and advantages of the course for ACE participants. 1999 at MAE was the year that moved the organisation most effectively from being a provider of mainly ALBE/ESL—with small moves into accredited childcare, the former workplace training certificate and VCE—into VET. This was through the introduction not only of the new Dip FE, but also of the online Learning Network partnership with RMIT and Work for the Dole. By integrating these initiatives, a new client-group—unemployed youth—was targeted; both as an important financial commitment and also creating ideological challenges for personnel.
In 1999, MAE enrolled four males in the new courses, integrating the preparation and work for the Certificate IV and Diploma levels. MAE kept detailed notes on these four, and also all Dip FE students on the following simple matrices.

**Table 5.3: Report on John aged 22**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>MAE Preparation</th>
<th>Access Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work in IT</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Year 11 (Vic)</td>
<td>CGEA level 4 GCO in LT</td>
<td>Family breakdown at 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary quals in IT</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 mths year 12</td>
<td>Unit Cert IV RMIT online Project</td>
<td>Moved interstate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enrolled yr 12</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Unemployed 5 yrs (Newstart)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Queensland and dropped out.</td>
<td>3 units Cert IV in Workplace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteer tutor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Core Dip FE modules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>VTAC/direct applications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Training in Web design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outcome 2000: Gained Direct Entry to Cert IV in IT at RMIT Business school. Also received an offer through VTAC for NMIT.

MAE Follow-up 2001: Diploma in IT. Part-time employment as a PC trainer at an employment agency.

Follow-up 2002-3: Completed last unit of Diploma, employed as an IT trainer.
### Table 5.4 Report on Alan aged 21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>MAE Preparation</th>
<th>Access Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work in IT</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Part year 11</td>
<td>CGEA level 4 GCO in IT</td>
<td>Family breakdown at 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary quals in IT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unit Cert IV RMIT online Project Management</td>
<td>Ongoing family problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 unit Cert IV in Workplace</td>
<td>Unemployed 4 yrs (Newstart)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteer tutor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Core Dip FE modules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>VTAC/direct applications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Web design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Outcome**

2000: Cert IV in IT. Accepted a VTAC offer of Advanced Diploma in IT. Dropped back to Cert IV level after 2 months. Told there were too many in the group and embarrassed at a tutorial—Dropped out

**MAE Follow-up**

2001: Returned to ACE to complete units of Cert II in IT online.

2002: Unemployed

2003: Employed in retail

### Table 5.5 Report on Ali aged 22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Language/ Culture</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>MAE Preparation</th>
<th>Access Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work in Business or IT</td>
<td>Macedonian Muslim</td>
<td>VCE (low ENTER)</td>
<td>Data entry in Access</td>
<td>NESB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary quals.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Short Centrelink-trade course in electronics</td>
<td>Unit Cert IV RMIT Career Management</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Core Dip FE modules</td>
<td>Family breakdown &amp; custody--year 11/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>VTAC/direct applications</td>
<td>Homeless periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Training in web design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteer office skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Outcome**

2000 Commenced Cert IV/Diploma in Information Technology at RMIT. Was challenged because he was 5 mins late due to running to the city campuses during the lunch break to use the prayer room. Was told “That’s just not on”. Walked out and would not return.

**Follow-up**

2001: Unemployed.

2004-5: Employed as gas meter reader

### Table 5.6 Report on Neil aged 29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>MAE Preparation</th>
<th>Access Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work as a social worker</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>Beginner &amp; Advanced computer</td>
<td>Ongoing Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary quals</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 months of accounting degree before diagnosed with bipolar disorder</td>
<td>Email/Internet</td>
<td>Family breakdown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>VTAC/direct applications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vol ESL class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Outcome**

2000: B Social Work at La Trobe Uni, Bendigo. Train travelled Tues-Thurs to Bendigo worked as a volunteer at an organisation supporting psychiatric disabilities.

**Follow-up**

2001: Transferred to Bundoora campus with advanced standing for vol work. Degree.

2003-4: Employed as a social worker.
MAE’s evaluation of the project (M. Curlewis, 1999a, p. 5) reported 100% successful entry in the first-choice course of each participant—although ‘Neil’s’ course was initially at Bendigo and not Bundoora. As the project was conducted by—and tied to—RMIT, Neil’s acceptance at a non-participating university was seen as a very positive endorsement of the individualised preparation completed at MAE.

The life-changing effect of the Dip FE on the four participants was ratified during a committee meeting ("Minutes of committee of management meeting, 13th December," 1999). Of these four males, three suffered major health problems (bipolar disorder, & grand mal epilepsy with all three undergoing psychological counselling), all were long-term unemployed and also undertaking Work for the Dole. All four had experienced severe family breakdown during their final secondary schooling—with all four being involved in custody battles with supporting family or magistrate’s court documentation. One was NESB/CALD and had encountered cultural discrimination due to his clothing and appearance (M. Curlewis, 1999b, p. 2).

Ursula Kelly’s ‘schooling desire’ (Kelly, 1997) was a vital factor noticed in Dip FE participants, many of whom had formerly rejected education. The significance of Kelly’s theorising in regard to the acquisition of learning had relevance for all four students who had been alienated from educational processes but displayed enthusiasm for unstructured, mentored learning.

The Dip FE depicted Kelly’s ‘desire’ in terms of the yearning of individuals to be personally transformed by recognition of the dominant culture and multiple literacies. The Dip FE students’ poor understanding of the hierarchical nature of academic bureaucracies, and their inability to conquer a multiplicity of literacies led to transformation—a recurring theme in this research.
Despite the very high support-costs it placed on infrastructure, a Dip FE evaluation recommended that the course be continued because:

a) “The life-changing personal outcomes of the course for the participants reflect MAE’s vision and values to the highest degree. This course successfully encapsulates and integrates all of MAE’s delivery in ALBE, ESL, VCE, General Preparatory and Vocational Education while ratifying the expertise of its RPL, online delivery and mentoring system.

b) Despite the additional cost and demand on staff time, the 100% success of first-choice tertiary course entry for all participants proves MAE’s success as a provider and promotes the organisation very effectively to its funding bodies’ (M. Curlewis, 1999b, pp. 3-4).

The delivery of the Dip FE clearly demonstrated the tensions facing ACE working with TAFE. It created a duality where the poorer sector was drawn toward the sophisticated resources, the imposing infrastructure and the recurrent funding of the TAFE sector. ACE deliverers tended to be seen as the ‘good’ mothers easing children into the big paternalistic world, and also the ‘bad’ mothers who had created naughty, nonconforming offspring who were often critical of mainstream educational structures.

Box 5.2: Comments by 1999 Dip FE participants

“I have only three days left and then I’m a social worker! Thanks for everything, always.”
(email—Neil)

“Last year I was on Work for the Dole and now they’ve hired me as a trainer for a group doing Work for the Dole. I’ll just get back to whipping them. Just kidding!”
(email—John)

The Dip FE could be seen as one of the most pertinent examples of the ambivalence which was evoked by the ACE sector. ACE providers commenced
delivery levels of the TAFE sector at AQF IV and V, yet it also reinforced delivery modes most applicable to ACE centres.

By delivering this accreditation, ACE had both moved toward becoming a TAFE but also helped to legitimize the sector to many tertiary educators, while also inverting the question: ‘Is ACE becoming TAFE’ to include ‘Is TAFE recognising ACE?’

5.3 MAE in 2004

In 2004, MAE delivered a wider range of vocational subjects, increased hours in English language to new arrivals and worked out of four venues. Many of its initiatives of the year or two previously were still active and its core values and purpose statements remained intact.

While Chapter four demonstrated the development of the organisation and set the benchmarks of 1994 against which change was to be evaluated, this section of the chapter researches 2004 to establish how a non-profit ACE organisation operated given the political, social and global changes which had occurred.

This section begins by demonstrating some of the main influences on the organisation including the impact of working in multiple venues and examines the initial impact of the Ministerial Statement and its effect on funding. The huge impact of variations in funding, financial accountability and statistical reporting are examined to demonstrate their increasing complexity.

At MAE, 2004 was an extremely difficult year, commencing with the fallout from the major flooding which had occurred before Christmas of 2003 (Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Manager’s report to committee of management, 24th February, 2004) and which led to closure of the organisation’s primary venue.
The discovery and cleanup of asbestos (Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Manager's report to committee of management, 24th March, 2004) in the floor of the building led to further closure while the building was sealed in plastic and carpets replaced during January and February—well beyond the usual commencement date of classes. This had a serious impact on the commencement of delivery of student contact hours for both the ACFE and RMIT classes.

These venue disasters were followed by loss of the main vocational co-ordinator and trainer who also taught VCE subjects (Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Manager's report to committee of management, 24th February, 2004), a burglary (Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Manager's report to committee of management, 24th March, 2004), and in September, loss of the MC2 project worker and relocation of half of the program from an upstairs venue in Waterfield Street, Coburg, to a shared building with the Moreland Migrant Resource Centre in Munro Street, Coburg (Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Manager's report to committee of management, 13th July, 2004). These problems were typical of any organisation which did not own its premises and has insufficient funding to attract staff away from the higher wages and permanency of many jobs in the other three educational sectors.

5.3.1 Ministerial Statement

The Ministerial Statement on ACE was possibly the most vital of the documents aimed at influencing ACE (Kosky, 2004). It commenced with an initial discussion paper and a subsequent round of consultations which were integral to the existing and future direction of ACE, clearly demonstrated by the Paper’s repetition of the ACE sector’s importance to the government’s Growing Victoria Together agenda (pp.1, 12, 13, 14, 26). This paper clearly endorsed a range of government agendum which would impact on the ACE sector: Neighbourhood Renewal; Best
The Ministerial Statement of 2004 was predictive of massive change to the direction of the ACE sector, mainly because it predicted funding cuts and increased demands for ACE organisations to become community hubs. Based on the ‘Growing Victorians Together’ report of 2001, the statement both praised ACE organisations for having “great networks and connections to their local communities” (Kosky, 2004, p. 2), then belittled their skills by suggesting they needed to work with AMES to teach new arrivals to gain the required level of competency in delivery of English-teaching.

The document outlined four main strategies to be implemented during the funding round (commencing September 2004) and encapsulated the changes which would continue to be implemented during 2005 and beyond. Strategy one aimed to broaden the role of ACE by undertaking five sub-strategies intended to integrate a number of community groups by forming partnerships and involve ACE with other government departmental initiatives to solve local issues. Strategy two aimed at targeting priority groups such as: Kooris, men aged over 45 years, people with a disability, people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), youth aged over 15 years and people aged over 55 years. Strategy three identified improvement to business, management, governance, workforce and volunteer practices. Strategy four proposed investment in ACE for Government priorities and Community needs with an initial change of implementing three-year funding and service agreements (Kosky, 2004).
Although the Ministerial Statement recognised ACE as a “valued contributor to the government’s vision for Victoria” (p.3), the rhetoric of the document predicted a huge increase in workloads for ACE organisations which was intended to provide a portal for government services. It also intended that ACE organisations become self-sustaining by encouraging fee-for-service in communities where people were unable to undertake courses with fees. It also advocated promoting voluntary labour in the guise of engagement in community activities reigniting the controversy of depleting paid employment for ACE workers (Kosky, 2004).

The immediate impact of these strategies was, despite the rhetoric about ACE providing “innovative, talented and committed community-based adult education organisations” (p.3), to reduce funding from the category which included fixed project funds, pool projects and ACE cluster funding. Effectively shifting 3-5% per annum for three years into a funding category known as Community Learning Partners, only programs possessing documented Memoranda of Understanding with other community or government networks could potentially apply to regain a portion of this 3-5% reduction. An organisation could thus have its funding cut by 3-5% for each of the 3 years. Effectively, for a medium-sized ACE provider receiving $100,000 per annum, the following formula simplifies this apparently small reduction.

Table 5.7 Three-year reduction of ACFE Funding by 3% plus 3% CPI for an Organisation Funded for $100,000.00

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reducing</th>
<th>First Year Triennial</th>
<th>Second Year Triennial</th>
<th>Third Year Triennial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3% + 3%</td>
<td>$94,000.00</td>
<td>$88,350.00</td>
<td>$83,049.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With an additional 3% CPI adjustment, this reduced the centre’s funding by $16,951.00, effectively reducing its operating funding by nearly one fifth.
This Ministerial Statement concluded with: “The Government looks forward to working with vibrant, energetic community-based organisations through a process of change” (Kosky, 2004, p. 3). With a potential loss of up to a fifth of the funding to some organisations, there would be few human resources left to generate this anticipated vibrancy.

In a meeting between Minister Kosky and ACEVic—the organisation representing ACE organisations—Kosky proposed three arguments in favour of the 3% cuts: redistribution according to government priorities, being a response “to the ACE sector’s request for certainty of funding” (p.2) and that 3% was not an unreasonable proportion (ACEVic, 2006). She commented on “the ACE sector’s lukewarm response to past increases” (p.3) implying that the sector was expected to demonstrate gratitude.

5.3.2 MAE’s 2004 Statistics

There were difficulties creating an accurate picture of the stakeholders of MAE as one student could have been enrolled in one single unit, or any number up to 12.

The ages of the participants tended to remain the same across all years with only minimal variations although there was a small lessening of average age when larger numbers of IT courses started in the second half of the 1990s.

Figure 5.4: Numbers by birthplaces. (From MAE Committee minutes 2004, Staff file 2004 and Nrolls Student statistics for 2004)

Figure 5.5: The ages of participants for MAE in 2004 (from MAE Committee, Volunteer Records and Nrolls Student statistics, 2004)
Like earlier statistics, MAE continued to attract and integrate a higher number of men than many programs—although a number of ‘Women only’ groups which dealt with health-related subjects, skewed the numbers toward women.

![Figure 5.6 Sex of participants for MAE 2004](from MAE Committee and Volunteer Lists, Nrolls statistics for 2004)

### 5.3.3 Funding

In 2004, MAE received funding from a number of national, state and local government departments. The Adult, Community and Further Education Division provided funding through a process of annual negotiation after submission of delivery and sustainability proposals backed by Managing Diversity and Professional Development plans. During 2004, this process became triennial. In 2004 the process in MAE’s regional area ruled that although there were high medium and low priority target-groups and industries, any certification above AFQ II was not to be funded (with the exception of the Dip FE), effectively reducing ACE delivery to the level of a preparatory sector without educational credibility or status—despite organisations being self-governed and RTOs.
The second largest funding source was DIMIA, through the AMEP 510 hours of free English classes to new migrants. This program was part of the Northern AMEP group with NMIT as lead agencies for RMIT, Kangan, PRACE, MAE, Olympic Adult Education, Wingate Avenue and—later—Meadow Heights Learning Shop.

RMIT continued to negotiate some funding through the on-going LearnLinks Community network program, where delivery hours were negotiated for the TAFE section’s IT Business school, and the Access departments. This funding had peaked in 2003 with delivery of the Certificate 11 in Business which was not offered again. The level of funding had remained at $2.70 per SCH which meant that it was subsidised by other funding sources—a serious concern for a small organisation and one causing constant re-evaluations of the value of the network in the face of MAE’s financial situation.

However, as part of this network, RMIT offered the opportunity to run between two and four small groups of IT training and Internet access to concession-card holders through the Microsoft-funded Unlimited Potential project. This commenced in 2005 and was expected to continue in 2006.

Moreland City Council continued to provide a triennial operational payment as part of its community grant program. In 2005 this increased to $5000, which cancelled the $4200 charged by the library in annual rent.

The State Library of Victoria funded the successful two-year MC2 project aimed at getting disadvantaged people online and using technology in a range of community venues. This ran between 2003 and 2004, but its effect was continuing as use of the site for online groups continued after the project concluded, giving MAE a number of e-groups for staff, committee and students.
Additional amounts of money were gained from a number of other sources including a number of small projects, a concession fee rebate from OTTE because of the high percentage of concession students at MAE, bank interest and the fees paid by students.

5.3.4 Venues

Having commenced in the Coburg Library venue, 2004 saw the organisation continuing its association with that venue but implementing a number changes. After gaining additional funding, the space in the library was too small to conduct additional classes and the interim use of rented premises upstairs in the Bellfield Building at 95 Bell Street, Coburg was terminated. The library continued to be used as an administrative office with two classrooms each containing a set of 10 computers networked to a server, and connected to a broadband ISP. For this space, the organisation paid rent of $4,200.00.

In 2003, MAE was approached by the Coburg branch of the Northern Migrant Research Centre about the possibility of sharing a larger building in the Coburg shopping precinct. After considerable negotiations with the property owner, the premises at 13 Munro Street Coburg was rented by the MRC with MAE as the sub-tenant with costs allocated at 55%-45%. (Minutes of the committee of management meeting, 13 September, 2003).

Commencing delivery in the building during the fourth term of 2003, by 2004 and throughout 2005, the premises was used for management, administration, classes, volunteers and archiving.

The use of private rental for classes added the financial burden of having to generate additional funding to cover the rent of $500 per week ($26,000.00 per
annum) and the supplementary costs of insuring two buildings, paying for two broadband connections, cleaning and other associated overheads.

During the second half of the nineteen nineties, MAE had conducted classes in Nicholson Street Community House in East Coburg. In 2004, CSWE and CGEA classes recommenced as part of a co-operative arrangement between the two organisations who had often shared students, staff and committee members or other volunteers. When NSCH decided not to reapply to be re-registered for ACFE funding, MAE was approached to re-institute the former classes.

In 2004, MAE was approached by the Melbourne City Mission Brunswick centre to conduct English for some of its female students, most of whom were recent migrants and so eligible for the 510 hours of free language classes as part of the AMEP funding. Having previously conducted classes in the Brunswick City Hall (South Brunswick) and Campbell Turnbull (West Brunswick), this again extended MAE’s delivery south of the Moreland Road boundary which separated the Coburg area from the Brunswick area of Moreland.

By 2004-5, MAE had reverted to delivering in multiple buildings, requiring staff to travel between centres, with the additional costs of the associated overheads; however, these addressed MAE’s vision statement for 2004 which stated that the organisation was to “deliver in multiple venues throughout the local government area of Moreland” (*Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Annual report*, 2004, p. 4).

### 5.3.5 Quality

One of the standards for ANTA, AQTF and other audits included compliance to ensuring maintenance of high quality in all aspects of the organisation. While both the policy and the practices for ensuring the required compliance and continuous improvement were documented in the MAE Operating Manual, an
additional Internal Review booklet was developed. This template listed the standards to be achieved and included examples with action plans which were counter-signed to ensure equitable input from a range of people.

While the existence of the Internal Review document ensured some sense of security and preparedness in case of a snap-audit, in 2004, the organisation had to complete the following audits: The annual financial audit by Turville Reeve CPA (March), the ANTA audit of students (April), an RMIT audit of Certificate 11 and 111 in IT (September) and an ACFE-re-registration audit (November). In 2005 the organisation completed the AQTF audit for re-registration as an RTO (March) the annual financial audit (March), the ANTA audit (April), and had notification of both an RMIT audit (November) and a NEAS audit of DIMIA-funded program for new migrants (both of which were temporarily postponed).

The year of 2006 commenced with the annual financial audit, an ANTA/DEST audit (April), notification of an ACFE re-registration audit for June, warning of an OTTE audit for any provider delivering the TAA, a June audit of Certificate II in IT and awareness that the two postponed audits would be rescheduled.

5.3.6 Business Documentation

MAE’s 2004 and 2005 business documents were considered a priority management task and constituted a vital aspect of the organisation. They ensured the organisation maintained its competitive edge so it expended many hours and much study ensuring the currency and relevancy of its documentation, often basing them on texts used in business degree courses to save spending money on consultants. Because the organisation had its first national AQTF audit early in 2005, a great deal of time in 2004 was dedicating to reviewing strategic statements, risk management and OH&S as well as all current manuals, plans and booklets. The review re-
endorsed the organisation’s strategic statements which provided all guidelines and encapsulated the organisation’s core values.

The Vision Statement for 2004-5 read:

Moreland Adult Education Assoc. has a future vision of the organisation moving towards an increasingly technological and management-oriented business, while maintaining its commitment to delivery of high-quality educationally diverse courses. In order to begin to fulfil this goal, the program will ensure AQTF compliant management skills and higher studies in technology and post-secondary level vocational courses, and deliver in multiple venues throughout the local government area of Moreland (Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Annual report, 2004, p. 4).

Likewise the Purpose Statement (MAE had rejected the term ‘Mission Statement’ because of its connotations of colonising through religion) which was current for the period covered by the years of 2004-2005 was:

Moreland Adult Education Association delivers high quality adult education in the local government area of Moreland. Employed by a Committee of Management comprised of local people, classes are taught by committed teaching staff through flexible modes of delivery in accessible local venues. The organisation is one of the most educationally and culturally diverse community-based programs in the state (Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Business Plan, Version 6, 2004, p. 23).

The Statement of Values had remained similar over the 1999 to 2005 period, although there was an increased emphasis on both technology due to student demand, and to diversity to reflect the multicultural nature of the local demographics and the multitude of origins of all MAE stakeholders.
“The Moreland organisation aspires to:

1. To deliver high-quality affordable adult education in the local government area of Moreland.
2. To have an ethical and business-like local committee of management.
3. To encourage employment of, and support for, highly qualified and skilled paid and unpaid staff.
4. To provide a wide range of opportunities for study including: a variety of venues, rolling intake and flexible times.
5. To promote an understanding, respect and acceptance of the diverse cultural groups represented in the City of Moreland.
6. To provide the most up to date technological resources to enhance learning and management of Moreland Adult Education Assoc. Inc.
7. To provide a range of vocational education and training within financial resources.
8. To ensure all programs, staff and students adhere to Moreland Adult Education’s access and equity principles” ("Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Operating manual of policies and procedures, version 5," 2004, p. 5).

These strategic statements provided—with the rules written for incorporation and rewritten in 2000 (Moreland Adult Education Assoc.: Constitution, Version 5, 2004)—the guiding principles on which the organisation relied for planning and monitoring. In addition, the organisation had a document which recorded all of its policies in a single six page booklet which was provided to the committee of management for reference ("Moreland Adult Education Assoc:
Overview of policies," 2004), and included in the information provided to staff
(Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Induction and staff information, version 2, 2004).

Apart from the website and five contracts with multiple addendums, the
routinely updated business documents for the organisation in 2005 included:

Table 5.8 MAE’s Business Documents for 2004. List from (Moreland Adult
Education Assoc: Manager's report to committee of management, 24th March, 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Manager</th>
<th>Manager with Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constitution</td>
<td>Business Plan</td>
<td>Risk Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Minutes</td>
<td>Induction Booklet</td>
<td>Internal Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence</td>
<td>Internal Review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Information Booklet</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Re-registration Book-ACFE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standards Book-AQTF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28 Delivery &amp; Assessment Plans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderation/Verification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 Insurance Policies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verified staff qualifications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contracts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current Curriculum and Training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>packages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Also: Electronic MYOB, VASS, Nrolls, ARMS, RMIT Tracking spreadsheet, Access Asset Register</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These documents did not include any project reports, electronic
communications or the routine correspondence of the organisation.

5.3.7 Other Documents

Commencing in 2003 and continuing throughout 2004 and into 2005-6, the
type of documentation produced by staff—apart from their teaching records—
changed in focus due to the funding MAE received under the State Library’s MC2
project. A number of staff commenced online groups where students joined and left
messages on the forums (discussion boards). This was most common in the VET
courses such as Certificate IV in Assessment & Workplace Training and Certificate
11 in IT, or in the return to study group run for the Dip FE—which had the highest
membership of MAE’s 39 affiliated groups. The level of computer skills needed to
undertake this activity was initially thought to be too high for low level literacy and language students. Introducing this electronic form of communication in 2003 was not the first effort to induce staff to stop relying on paper-based staff newsletters and meetings to disseminate ideas and information. When MAE commenced the LearnLinks connection with RMIT, access to their Distributed Learning System (DLS) and the TAFE Virtual Campus (TAFEVC) had proven unpopular and unsuccessful. For the majority of the staff and the committee, the MC2 site changed the way people communicated and avoided the distribution of much paper-based information through the uploading of shared and group files. For some student groups this also worked well creating both a communication tool and a means of bonding for those with reasonable IT skills and adequate literacy levels such as the Dip FE group.

Although few student booklets were produced, apart from an end of year magazine or other example of student writing, the work completed by students in the self-expression writing at all four levels of the CGEA and the CSWE, the personal essays of the VCE English units and the Dip FE clearly demonstrate that the self-revelatory aspects of people writing in ACE still existed.

5.4 Comparison of MAE 1994 and 2004

Researching the formative years of the Coburg organisation and the mature MAE was like recording the history and existence of two different organisations. This was particularly evident through the quantitative data which examined six main areas: Stakeholders (particularly student numbers and profiles), volunteer numbers and types, funding amounts and sources, accreditation of course types and levels, accountability (exemplified by audit types and numbers) and venue overheads and infrastructure.
5.4.1 Stakeholders

While a number of commonalities based largely on the demographics of the local government area existed in a comparison of the students of the ‘two’ organisations, there was a pronounced rise in the numbers of students undertaking vocational courses although language and literacy remained the predominant focus of the organisation due to its participation in the Northern AMEP consortium delivering 510 hours of free English to recent migrants. Until this tender was gained in 2003, the shift from language and literacy students toward those wanting vocational training was becoming more pronounced.

Students. The most obvious change in regard to students was the number. In 1994, the numbers engaged were 28 matched with one-to-one tutors, five in an MID group, and seven in the Tuesday evening group, plus an additional Thursday evening ALBE group of nine, making a total of 49 participants who all met in Coburg Library.

In 2005, the number of people entered into the Nrolls software for the year was 625 (Nrolls statistical report to OTTE, 2005), and were spread over two main and two occasional venues (Coburg Library, 13 Munro Street in Coburg, Nicholson Community House in East Coburg, and Melbourne City Mission in North Brunswick).

The composition of the student body had also changed markedly. The program commenced with English-speakers in the early eighties, and added enrolments of people with ‘non English-speaking backgrounds’ [NESB] in the early nineties. In 2004 and 2005 MAE had representation by over 50 culture and language groups (Nrolls statistical report to OTTE, 2004) (Nrolls statistical report to OTTE, 2005). An additional change was through the delivery of AQF IV and V levels with more
employed people undertaking a workplace and assessment course plus Information Technology’s multimedia stream. Yet a third change has been flagged for 2006, with the priority target groups—at various periods being Women without Qualifications, NESB/ESL, Seniors, Youth and MID adults—being set at males over 45 years old and people not having any year 12 qualification, along with some of the other categories. This was regardless of the demographics identified by ACE organisations in their specific locations and that the vision and purpose statements continued to emphasise that the composition at all levels of the organisation was intended to replicate the Moreland demographics (Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Business Plan, Version 6, 2004).

Box 5.3: Student Target Groups

“I don’t think we just attract disadvantaged people. I mean, clearly it does attract that group of people. But the other sectors have gone out of their way to try and attract those people too. It attracts people from the whole spectrum of the socio-economic milieu. Because - I think because of the issue that we were talking about, that it is a different methodology, a different philosophy. … I see the whole range of, you know, conventional conservative corporates, through to aging hippies.”

Mike, lines: 551-570

“The thing that I don’t like about ACE currently is I’m seeing these bureaucratic decisions coming in from higher organisations that, or the people that determine what ACE organisations can run or can’t run… I can see it sort of creeping into the system where people are being pigeon-holed and that, you know, you must target more of these people, you must run this course, to meet this demographic. There seems to be a lot of these political innuendoes seeping into it, depending on what’s favourable by what ministers and what government is in at the time.”

Ben, lines: 263-272

Ben’s comments were mainly referring to the funding model for ACFE which prioritised the non-year 12 criterion, as there was no allowance for other sub-criteria. These included the length of time since the qualification had been achieved, if the year had been completed overseas and the person had no English language or literacy, or if the person had a tertiary qualification but was not computer literate.

Committee. The committees of the early years of MAE, as discussed in Chapter 4, (pp.111-139), were largely composed of English-speakers, most of who had been born and educated in Australia and were of Anglo-Celtic heritage. They tended also to be unpaid voluntary literacy tutors, and most not only attended meetings to enact business but also participated in charitable works as described by Maeve, the longest-term MAE interviewee. Biddy, who had undertaken two project worker roles at MAE and was also an extremely experienced teacher and professional adult educator in a range of mainstream and less formal learning environments, also recalled her joint committee and volunteer experience.

Box 5.4: Recollections of Early Committee Roles.

“I remember one man pushing me out under the light to make sure, he thought I was some strange religion. I had to keep saying “It’s the Red Cross”. He said “Show me”.
Maeve, lines: 207-209

“I was a committee member of Scopie. I was a home tutor scheme tutor. I did voluntary work at the local women’s refuge, which also had an education process. I did a lot of committee work, voluntary work. I worked with the Learning Exchange newspaper at one stage, you know, writing up things. So a very wide variety of skills and roles, diverse roles.”
Biddy, lines 233-237
Excerpts from the Minutes of the MAE meetings for the year 2004 exemplify the change of emphasis in the business of the organisation compared with the more socially-focussed subjects of the earlier years of MAE (Appendices 1:I and 1:J), indicating the diversity of interests and responsibilities which predicted the inference that the two periods were almost like researching dual organisations.

By contrast to the early committee members, MAE’s later groups contained high numbers of people with a diversity of cultures and languages, reflecting both their documented target of reflecting the local demographics in all levels of the organisation (“Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Operating manual of policies and procedures, version 5,” 2004). In 2005, the committee was comprised of two Greek-speakers, one Italian-speaker, one Turkish-speaker, one Vietnamese-speaker, one multi-lingual member (Arabic, French etc.) and four English-speakers. In contrast to the ages of the original, pre-1995 committees whose ages tended to be over 60 years old, the 2005 committee’s ages ranged from 24-55 years.

However, there had also been a change in both the numbers of members, and the gender balance. It was common for the pre-1995 committees at MAE to have 14-16 long-term members, unlike in 2005 when the committee had nine members. In the former committees, males and females tended to be equally balanced, but by 2005 the balance had shifted to replicate many other ACE committees with a female/male ratio of 7/2, for no apparent reason. This problem of accessing willing voluntary committee members and retaining them recurred in the comments by interviewees such as Julie and May. As Gladys and Jane both explained, this was largely due to the increased demands for business expertise which many volunteers felt were beyond their capabilities.
Box 5.5: Governance in ACE

“Every community organisation that I know, with the exception of PRACE, is struggling to maintain a committee of management. And I think people in the old days you used to get people who just ‘OK. I can help in the local community’. And that was good enough. Now you need people from the local community who are participants in the organisation and also can deal with governance issues.”
Gladys, lines: 1430-1435

“I mean, there’s nothing wrong with having a diverse committee. But it’s great, it’s really good. … There was some comment last month saying that people were frustrated with the amount of paperwork. … But somehow people, all organizations are having to tighten up on OH&S risk management, on just on the documentation that, you know, they produce…. It’s in the AQTF standards. And I reckon that’s going to be spread out to other organizations. And you’re going to have to get accreditation on your governance, as much as your service delivery.”
Gladys, lines: 1453-1469

“I worked a lot on the sort of—and obviously it’s governance, a governance issue because it’s the committee—but I did a lot of policy development, staff conditions, position descriptions, quality control things, diversity, plans, quality plans, all that kind of stuff.”
May, lines: 311-313

One of the survey respondents stated quite categorically that the language used was too difficult to be on the committee any more. This had created a quandary for MAE—and possibly other ACE programs—because of their commitment to having student representation on their committees which created the problem of having a community business conducted by people without business or governance skills. Although well-intentioned, they feared their decisions could place them and others at risk of legal and industrial action.

Teachers and Unpaid Tutors. With the advent of more accredited courses and training packages, there was a change in the expectations for qualifications and experience in paid teachers and trainers. Early staff members were predominantly volunteers who had undergone six weeks of tutor training either at the (then) Preston
TAFE or special sessions conducted at Coburg Library by regional office staff. In 1992, there were 34 trained one-to-one volunteers, one qualified teacher taking a special needs group of people with mild intellectual disabilities, one former volunteer tutor who was paid to conduct two hours of reading and writing (*Tuesday Knighters*, 1992) and a tertiary-qualified co-ordinator, who had undertaken the only adult literacy teaching course available at the time, conducted by the CAE.

During the pre-1994, formative years of the Coburg organisation, volunteers provided a large part of the teaching in either one-to-one pairings or as classroom support workers. In 1987, with almost forty volunteers on the organisation’s books, their characteristics and number had remained similar since 1984. Most were middle aged or seniors who were English-speakers, and fulfilled roles both a literacy tutors and committee members.

Box: 5.6: Comparison of Comments on Volunteers

“"That was in 1987 and there were about 10 of us doing the training with another 30 or so at functions. I think we were all Aussies too. … The volunteers were nearly all old and I felt quite a baby at 30… They were more like the olds who run op shops. … We met in the library in pairs matched by the part-time co-ordinator, Sue. There were only a couple of books to use as texts so we used to make things up like ‘me’ books, and flash cards. It was pretty amateurish I suppose but people did learn to read and write.”
Jules, lines: 61-70

“"So they’re - that’s a new breed of volunteers that are coming to ACE because they’re actually getting some very good people skills and work experience that will then go onto their CV along with their Ph.D. or whatever it is, and make them really viable.”
May, lines: 369-372

By 1994, the number had dropped to 31, but one volunteer spoke Italian as her first language (CALA, 1994). Application usually took place in a phone contact, and training for new volunteers took up to 10 weeks (M. Curlewis, 1990) after an initial interview, with at least bi-annual meetings for professional development and two
The Values that You Hold

social events each year. This thriving volunteer program, by 2004, had reduced to the eight people listed in the report to the committee of management (MAE, 2004).

Table 5.9: Numbers and Languages of Unpaid Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1994</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Volunteer Tutors</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Committee</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages spoken by unpaid volunteers and committee (also English)</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-lingual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The drop in numbers of volunteers both as tutors and on the committee of management occurred in the main ten year period being researched. For the committee this was largely due to the fear of legal repercussions—despite the organisation maintaining directors’ insurance.

There was a change of focus in reasons for volunteering with fewer numbers wanting to assist, and more interested in using the time to gain additional skills on resumes. The ages of volunteers in 1994 were not recorded, but over 70% were retired and undertook volunteer work to maintain involvement in a community activity. Jane fulfilled her hours of voluntary work for economic reasons.

Box 5.7: Economic Volunteering

“Being a carer for years, I’ve been unemployed. And being of a certain age, it’s difficult to get employment. So actually at the beginning when I stated volunteering, like at the Community Information Centre, it was really to get something for a CV. You know? …Which, I suppose, sounds a bit selfish. But it’s a bit of a quid pro quo. …The Centrelink factor. Thirty-two hours a fortnight.”

Jane, lines 724-759
In 2005, there were voluntary tutors assisting in classes under qualified teachers, a one-to-one tutor, with one volunteer also doing administrative work. Paid teaching staff numbered 17, all of whom had degrees and post-graduate teaching qualifications if teaching VCE or language and literacy, or a minimum of Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training plus an accredited qualification at least at the level they were training, if vocational trainers. Language and literacy teachers were also expected to have gained the workplace and assessment training certificate despite the controversy about its necessity.

Box 5.8: Contrasting Staff Members

“It was very, very different from what it is now. It was essentially all volunteers. With co-ordinators paid a very small amount of money. And maybe one or two classes that worked with a paid qualified teacher.”
Gladys, lines: 822-824 [describing another ACE organisation in the northern region when she started in 1990]

“I can’t believe that I’ve been so fortunate to work with such a professional and really highly skilled group of people over the last few years, which has been amazing. … I’ve had access to work with some amazing, amazingly different people that you wouldn’t get perhaps in other sort of environments.”
May, lines: 413-418

There was a pronounced difference in the number, composition and qualifications of paid staff in the ten years in question, particularly in regard to the necessity to hold assessor training which was a requirement of the AQTF standards. Before 1994, an effective volunteer could graduate to teach a small group, with the only training requirements being their original volunteer tutor training and possibly a six week course such as was offered by the CAE covering teaching groups of literacy students.
In 1994, although most staff at the organisation had some kind of degree or teaching qualification, they did not need a training qualification to teach vocational subjects. By 2004, vocational teachers needed a qualification to at least the level of the course they were to teach, plus the workplace certificate and approximately four years of experience in an appropriate industry. To teach and assess language students, staff were required to hold a teaching degree, a post-graduate qualification in ESL and also the workplace certificate—or be able to prove they were supervised by a trained assessor and possess certified documentation as to that supervision. By 2005, with the update to the new Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA), this was again changing and placing additional expectations on staff to upgrade qualifications.

Box 5.9: Teaching ESL in ACE

“And he said ‘Why don’t you take all your qualifications and go there to see what she can do for you’? See when I did that (..) immediately employed me to teach English as a Second Language—more of my background and that she felt I would be able to teach them. So while I was there she could only give me about four hours a week and that wasn’t enough. So her good friend was (…). And so when I went to ..., (…) looked at all my qualifications and she said ‘Look. This is fantastic. But’. And I said “What is the but about”? She said ‘I’m a stickler for having the record right. Unless you do a Post-graduate Diploma or, at that time, General Certificate of teaching English as a Second Language, you cannot step into my classroom’”
Rani, lines: 415-424

“Want too many qualifications”
“We all have to do workplace training even to teach ESL”
“Everyone has to do the Cert .4 even if we have a Dip Ed and years of experience—which is crazy”
Survey Comments

The emphasis on completing the workplace qualifications was indicative of a shift in attitude within organisations and because the change was decreed from
external and not internal sources, it created anxiety and resentment for the staff members interviewed for this work, reinforcing some of the comments made by the survey respondents.

5.4.2 Community

When taken as a group, the people involved with MAE both during the early Coburg days, and later in MAE, often identified themselves in terms of their local or educational communities, indicating that there had been little change in their perceptions of locality and connectedness. However, a need to maintain this connection also created an internal form of pressure within the organisation. The tension between maintaining the best features of a community while incorporating business practices and becoming compliant for multiple audits created a great deal of stress in many people.

Of the survey responses which related specifically to the community connectedness of the ACE centre, there were five positive comments. These included comments on the maintenance of friendliness and accessible costs, the retention of a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, that there had been no change as everyone was still friendly and offered support and the fact that “no-one cares if you’re poor or have health problems”. The final statement by a staff member at DVLC that “ACE centres had held to their underlying principles”, seemed to encapsulate the place of ACE organisations within their local communities and that although there was perceived to be a staggering amount of change in the sector in relation to business and funding, and some in education and learning, there had been minimal change in the people or ACE or in the values and place of the centres in their local communities.

Responses such as the DVLC one reinforced the notion that northern ACE organisations’ positions within their geographic location may have been markedly
different depending on the venue and context of need, but emphasised the importance of a sense of social connectedness. Given their statuses as northern metropolitan ACFE-funded programs there could hardly have been more contrasting organisations than MAE and DVLC. MAE operated out of multiple and constantly shifting venues for which it paid different levels of local-government and private rental, with very high percentages of recent migrants, unemployed people with high levels of public-transport use. DVLC had a very attractive, council-owned learning centre with low levels of recent migrants and high levels of car ownership. Yet the responses in relation to the community connectedness of the centres and their retention of core values were very similar with both reflecting resistance to loss of those aspects perceived as indicators of community-connectedness.

The interviewees replicated their contentions that there was a strong sense of local connectedness to their locality and its facilities and services. This again validated the contentions of Heimstra about the geographic and shared interests of horizontal communities as discussed in Chapter 2 (pp. 24-26).

These findings—which resulted from the survey which was discussed in Chapter 4—tentatively predicted both the content of the historical educational ‘case’ which was MAE, and the individual interviews which expanded on the content of the survey responses. Working both back and forward between the three types of data created a triangulation of data-checking and also reaffirmed the interactive, reciprocal nature of the research and structural and ordering elaboration which were two of the coding patterns recommended by Glaser (1978, pp. 74-76).

5.4.3 Education

The changes occurring between 1994 and 2004 in relation to education had initially been of some concern to the survey respondents although ‘education and
learning’ had a number of reaffirming responses from those surveyed, with 22 positive comments, all in relation to either the breadth of courses and/or IT. The 11 negative responses were all related to teaching work-loads and the need for qualifications, less flexibility and a reduction on the emphasis on language and literacy (which were not applicable to MAE which has increased its delivery of both due to the AMEP funding). These negativities emphasised the pressure to change student priority groups to reflect current government policies by attracting a constantly-changing set of target students.

However, people also felt very positive about some changes to incorporate IT and other vocational courses which assisted local people to gain employment, as Moreland was a local government area with a high percentage of unemployed people.

Box 5.10: Positive Comments by Respondents Relating to Education

“wider range of subjects available”
“more programs offered”
“better/faster IT”
“scope of courses bigger”
“greater emphasis on voc ed.”

In relation to MAE, education was a subject which saw a considerable number of quantifiable changes related to learning. In the early days of the organisation, learning was the priority, but within an unprofessional and often philanthropic context. As the interviewee Maeve had explained, there was a lot of goodwill but less expertise, making learning a strongly social process with no emphasis or measurement of outcomes, tutoring often being accomplished by volunteers with a short training course in literacy and no accredited qualifications.
By 1995, with the introduction of the accredited CGEA, registration with the then Victorian Board of Studies (later the VCAA), and a shift of emphasis on qualifications and educational courses previously only available in the TAFE, accreditation of courses became a constantly recurring subject in MAE’s documentation (Annual report, 1994; Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Annual Report, 1995) (Moreland Adult Education: Operating manual, 1999). By 2006, the organisation was delivering only accredited training delivered by post-graduate qualified teachers and vocational trainers with a minimum of one AQF IV level accreditation.

The only volunteer training which had been delivered since 1995 was the newly state-accredited Course in Introduction to Volunteer Training which had been hurriedly introduced to organisations like MAE to gain funding to train disadvantaged volunteers for the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne. Because this was an accredited course, its implementation demonstrated another major change in MAE’s delivery, as in the years before 1995 volunteer training had been delivered using its own curriculum of unaccredited workshops (M. Curlewis, 1990).

Although the wide disparity in educational courses and increased hours of delivery were both measurable and visible to people associated with ACE, the opinions of the survey respondents were ambivalent about the changes, with some applauding the implementation of such variety of choice, and others negative about a perceived loss of flexibility and the pressure to change. Both in respondents and interviewees—particularly for paid staff members—there was considerable dissatisfaction maintained through the years with the lack of working conditions and
the salary-rate which was not comparable to the TAFE rates despite requirements for the same educational levels and delivery of the same courses.

In relation to the ten to twelve year changes in MAE, teaching saw less one-to-one with volunteers, the increase of online delivery and accredited courses and the introduction of vocational courses up to Diploma level. However, the values which maintained a commitment to offering personal support to students, flexible delivery—especially RPL—and prioritising small classes which encouraged confidence and skill-building remained static.

The interviewees tended to emphasis the positive aspects of personal support and legitimate education for which they had maintained their ACE connections.

Box 5.11: Ferhat on ACE Accessibility

“Well, the fact that it offers so much and it’s actually accessible. I like the fact that you can really—for a couple of minutes, you know, you can speak to someone. I mean, that’s it. You’ve got a course and often it’s certified. They’re all certified. Which—I like that.”
Ferhat, lines: 549-552

Accreditation. Delivery in the early years of the organisation was based on the need to deliver contracted hours each year. The student contact hours were predominately for literacy, with steadily increasing amounts for English language with local municipalities like Coburg seeing increases because of the larger numbers of ESL adults. Accreditation was thought to be the prerogative of TAFEs.

By 1994, very few hours of delivery were accredited although at MAE the new certificate of General Education for Adults was being delivered in small groups. Although literacy and language staff had all received training offered by ACFE, there was some resistance to incorporating it into the literacy curriculum because the
predominately older students at the organisation had limited employment opportunities, and these were perceived as the only legitimate reason for delivering accredited training. However, because of the status of the VCE as the secondary school certificate, there was considerable support for the introduction of a small number of modules of the VCE to introduce students to the possibility of pathwaying to a TAFE or the CAE to complete the accreditation.

However, by eleven years later MAE had a large number of accredited courses on its scope of registration and was delivering courses up to Diploma level.

Table 5.10 Comparison of Accredited Courses 1994 and 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>CGEA</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCE</td>
<td>VCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course in Event Volunteering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cert IV/Diploma of Further Education</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CSWE</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cert 11 in IT</td>
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<td>Cert 11 in IT (Applications)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cert 111 in IT (General)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cert IV in IT (Multimedia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cert 11 in Business</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cert 111 in Business</td>
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<td>Cert 111 in Business Administration</td>
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<td>Cert IV in Business Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cert IV in Assessment &amp; Workplace Training</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cert IV in Training &amp; Assessment</td>
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</table>

(M. Curlewis, 2004)

Having established itself as a place where adult students could undertake qualifications up to AQF V, it was extremely negative for the organisation when the ACFE Division stopped funding any course above ‘entry level’ which was delivered by ACE providers claiming they were only delivered by TAFEs (ACEVic, 2006).
This effectively meant that students of MAE were restricted to studying AQF II and as most were concession-card holders were unable to afford fees. As many were physically disabled, socially disadvantaged or had family restrictions, the decision by the ACFE Division to restrict access to ACE courses had effectively reduced the opportunities of disadvantaged adults.

5.4.4 Business

It was by comparing the externally-applied pressures related to funding for the pre-1995 organisation and the following years that one of the main changes became apparent. The difference between the funding gained in 1994-5 compared with the financial report for 2004, clearly demonstrated the growth of the organisation, and clarified the concerns about the levels of responsibilities for voluntary committees of management to whom the amount of funding seemed a very worrying task.

The negative changes identified in comments by the 67 respondents as (Chapter 4, p. 93) revolved around too much accountability, responsibility and paperwork, too much stress for staff, too many audits, diminishing funding and too much emphasis on teaching qualifications and the accreditation of courses. By far the most common negatives (47) related to the stresses of paperwork, accountability and other documentation for administration and teachers. These comments predicted the findings of both the organisational case student and the interviewees.

Box 5.12: Statements by Respondents on Business Changes

“workload is high, breadth of work staggering”.
“accountability overwhelming”
“under paid/over worked”
“greater administrative and compliance issues to deal with”
“pressure for audits”
There were no really positive comments reported by survey respondents in relation to the business and financial area of ACE. Most comments were entirely negative with “what a farce!” giving a clear direction of one respondent’s negativity.

When the survey responses were checked against the comparison of MAE and the interviewee’s comments to create a triangulation of data, the commonalities of issues, comments and opinions were very similar. All three resulted in negative responses regarding pressure to change administrative procedures, the over-emphasis on paper work and management stress. There were concerns about changes to funding styles and amounts, and worries about sustainability, the repetitious audits and the constraints placed on ‘bottom up’ local organisations by ‘top-down’ bureaucratic demands.

**Box 5.13: Ben on Pressures in ACE**

The thing that I don’t like about ACE currently is I’m seeing these bureaucratic decisions coming in from higher organisations that, or the people that determine what ACE organisations can run or can’t run, And sort of putting these sort of demographics within the organisation and that sort of reminds me a lot with my banking career. How people were sort of pigeon-holed into, you know, for the bank’s profit seeking aspects although, you know, ACE organisations don’t need to make a profit. I can see it sort of creeping into the system where people are being pigeon-holed and that, you know, you must target more of these people, you must run this course, to meet this demographic. There seems to be a lot of these political innuendoes seeping into it, depending on what’s favourable by what ministers and what government is in at the time.

Ben, lines: 263-272

In relation to MAE, when comparing and contrasting the business of the young and mature stages of the organisation, the largest numbers of changes were evident. For the committee, the implications of the changes had decreed not only a reduction in numbers, but changes to the responsibility involved in being in charge of a community owned and managed non-profit organisation. During the early years of
the organisation, as stated by interviewees Maeve and Gladys particularly, it was enough to be a local resident who wanted to help out, to be involved supporting the learning and participate in the social functions which were referred to repeatedly in the minutes of the meetings. By the late 1990s and into the 2004-5 period the business levels and requirements for understanding risk management, OH&S, compliance, marketing and other business-related terms had increased markedly. This often intimidated those whose language and literacy skills were at lower levels despite the organisation’s commitment to maintaining all documentation in plain English ("Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Operating manual of policies and procedures, version 5," 2004, p.5).

**Compliance.** A comparison of the audits and compliance requirements expected between the ten years of this study show one of the greatest areas of difference. In 1994, the organisation had an annual financial audit of its finances. That was the only audit. The organisation also had to be registered as a provider in order to receive ACFE funding. As was listed on p. 187, in 2004 and 2005, MAE had four or five audits each year all of considerable complexity, often taking weeks of preparation to ensure everything was ready to present to an auditor in a confident manner. As well as these audits, there were an ACE cluster report and two MC2 reports (2004), three reports each year for RMIT, accountability reports both years for State Works and Services, Commonwealth Equipment Funds, Sustainability funding, and Community Hubs (2005).
Box 5.14: Accountability

“I think a lot of the reports, the accounting, the different stuff, admin stuff that has to be done. I find, I think it puts a lot of pressure on everyone.”
Julie, lines: 990-993

“Differences? Where do I start! I think there’s a huge emphasis on business now. What with audits, insurances, business plans, strategic planning, OH & S, risk management it’s just like being at work. ACE people are doing their best and just waiting for the sky to fall—either financially or through audits or being sued.”
Jules, lines 78-81

“It seems ACFE spends a lot of time thinking up of new forms or requirements needed by ACE organisation.”
“Workload is high. Breadth of work is staggering”
Survey comments

This overwhelming amount of accountability, the administrative load and the stresses it placed on ACE workplaces is largely due to the multiplicity of funding sources from which it gained funding. Not only did the issue cause the most comments by the survey respondents, it also recurred repeatedly during the subsequent interviews and was certainly the main theme which drew the most negative comments and emotions as well.

Unlike in mainstream sectors, most ACE centres like MAE gained their funding from a variety of sources and by undertaking numerous poorly-funded projects to ensure some stability of staffing and give committees some assurance of future sustainability.

5.5 Concluding Comments

The initial confirmation of change came with reviewing the comments written on the brief survey distributed to ACE stakeholders in the ACFE-funded northern metropolitan region of Melbourne. Although the questions relating to change created an impression that some changes had occurred, the comments of the participants were
predominantly related to four main areas: education, business, the effects of change on people, and resistance to change within an organisation or ACE community venue; all of which created an initial set of issues and themes. (Appendix 1:H and 1:K).

The primary differences which became evident during a comparison of the young and mature organisations (Chapters 4 and 5) were that the learning which took place in the early years of the organisation was much more informal, whereas by the later years there was pressure for it to become similar to the learning which took place in secondary schools, TAFEs and other private RTOs, and more akin to mainstream education—although levels were also restricted for ACFE-funding.

The second major difference concerned the business part of the organisation which was originally much less competitive and only responsible for small numbers of resources, limited funding and with minimal accountability. There were also major changes to the way the organisation gained funding—as demonstrated in Chapter 4 by the application process leading to specific small grants such as ‘VALG’ for adult literacy, and the project-based funding of the LearnLinks and Dip FE.

For the other two areas identified in the organisational case history—people and community—the differences were not as negative from respondents and interviewees as they had been for the changes to business and education. Although the composition of MAE’s cultural demographic had expanded and diversified, its aims and vision were still based on the 1994 goal of attracting similar constituencies of local people from all Moreland cultural and language groups. The emphasis on location, venues, accessibility, replicating the goals of the Moreland local government area in terms of diversity and attracting residents, remained sufficiently
consistent to maintain the organisational emphasis on a geographic community as described by Heimstra (2002, 2003).

Instead of complaints on the external pressures to change—as had been obvious for business and educational change—the people and their communities were resistant to change. This created an inverse form of pressure applied to ACE not to change.

Finalising a comparison of the pre and post 1994 MAE made two main outcomes very apparent. Firstly, the data confirmed that—overall—there was considerable change in MAE in the last 10 years, which was one of the guiding questions asked at the commencement of the research.

Secondly, the comparison confirmed that the difference between the two periods created a picture of ‘life-stages’ of a single organisation which was so pronounced that they often appeared to be two different organisations—the old CALG/CAEA and the new MAE.

As for overall change, the external pressures to change related to business and education. The people involved and their sense of community applied a different form of pressure on MAE—effectively a resistance to change. This is confirmed by the quantitative data which showed there were extremely large changes in all aspects of the business management and administration of the organisation. However, while the demographic composition and numbers of people involved had increased, their learning and interest in engaging in activities had not changed as markedly. For even though vocational training had been implemented, students often made their choice of ACE based on the same criteria: accessible locality, low fees, personal support and familiar venues.
In relation to the organisational study, these changes created a range of outcomes which placed considerable external pressures on organisations such as MAE to ‘corporatise’. Most of the major changes which were observable for the organisation were in response to ‘top-down’ pressures which had been implemented in order to maintain viability and increase funding during the growth years of the organisation.

The organisation of the 1982-1994 and 1995-2004 periods was different in many ways as this chapter has documented. Although one organisation undergoing change, it can almost be seen as two different organisations in relation to measurable data such as funding, stakeholder numbers and types, audits, accreditation and other business themes. The early period of the organisation was a developing one as Coburg Adult Literacy Assoc., and the later manifestation was the mature Moreland Adult Education Assoc. This does not deny that there were many commonalities, but concludes that many aspects and features of the organisation were very different.

While a number of the business-related themes were able to be quantified in the organisational case study it was only through working through the data gained from the individuals that their opinions, ideas, feelings and values were expressed.

Following on from the organisational comparison—which was initially expected to provide the bulk of the data—this research gradually shifted its emphasis to the interviewees because of the depth of detail of their narratives and stories. The shift of emphasis on who participates in ACE, why and for what periods can be considered an outcome of the organisational case study. Although the interviewees had been enlisted to offer information and opinions, they enlarged this study because of the sheer breadth of experiences articulated by each of them.
6. MAE STAKEHOLDERS’ PERCEPTIONS of BUSINESS and EDUCATION

“One in my previous role was the introduction of the AQTF and you’d have to have the same compliance standards for a small ACE provider who ran two or three courses as you did for a big TAFE that had the infrastructure and resources to respond to that. ... We’d all have to be, have the same quality and we have to be compliant. But I think that the lack of resourcing to support us in that was a huge impact in the last eighteen months.” May

This chapter commences with an overview of the interviews which were conducted over a period of nearly three years (2002 and 2005), expanding on the initial questions of the survey. While Chapters 4 and 5 examined data gained from MAE which provided a case study of an organisation—largely to examine it for change—Chapter 6 commences the analysis of the data provided by the 18 interviewees. In conjunction with Chapter 7’s ‘perceptions of the self and community’ it analyses the data related to the lived experiences of the participants, recounting their perceptions of MAE in relation to Business and Education.

The chapter begins with general comments on the interviews and interviewees. It then describes the interview questions and the characteristics of the interviewees especially in regard to birthplaces, first language, sex and highest level of schooling achieved, and gives an overview of differences and similarities of the people involved. Having identified the people and their characteristics as one of the main areas for analysis in the research, the second part of the chapter then considers the themes which were common to the interviewees, and explains how they were grouped into four dimensions.

This chapter analyses the data supplied by the interviewees in regard to the two dimensions which engendered the most negative responses, especially in relation to workers’ stresses, the burden of paperwork, unreasonable demands for accountability, and diminishing government funding. These were the Business and Education dimensions, toward which interviewees showed resentment in the belief
there had been external pressures to change the sector applied by funding bodies in response to government policies.

6.1 Interactive Discussions

Initially the general aim of the taped interviews and discussions, was to elicit data around three areas of interest with the expectation that useful information would emerge concerning: First, the diversity of people who engage in MAE and exemplify an ACE community and secondly, the origins of the interviewee’s primary contact with ACE, then the length and number of roles within MAE or of any other ACE organisation. Thirdly, the aim was to elicit the opinions, values and ideas of each person in relation to any perception of changes in the ACE sector.

As the interviewing progressed, autobiographical material often outweighed the data on ACE—at least during the initial stages of each interview. The stories people told not only evidenced the reasons people engaged in ACE, but demonstrated an engaging example of the diversity and multicultural richness of people engaged in the sector in the local government area of Moreland.

6.1.1 Range of Responses

Despite using the same questions and interview technique, there was a wide range of responses, both in the amount of detail and the depth of personal information (Appendix 2). Initially this appeared to be along gender lines due to the less expansive responses from George and Frank, but Ferhat and Mike’s interviews were as detailed as any of the females interviewed. An example of the brevity of replies can be seen where George’s responses to the introductory questions were noticeably more guarded and selective.
Box 6.1: Comparison of the Responses

“Oh. We had tech. stuff there. But—Um. In those days.” … “Yeah. Yeah.” …
“Done a bit of metalwork, woodwork and all that sort of stuff.” … “Yeah. I had a go
at that. Yeah.” … “I was more into woodwork than metal, I think” … “It’s probably
how I became a carpenter”
George, lines: 177-193

"Yes. I was closer to my Dad than my Mum. I had some issues with her as I was
growing up. And I felt a bit threatened by her because- You’ll be surprised when I
tell you - She had this colour bias. My mother is part Thai and part Indian. And she
was of a fair complexion and tiny, an exquisite looking woman. And she always felt
I was black. And that it would be hard to get me married. So she encouraged me to
study.” … “Yes. She said ‘You study. Education is the passport to life. I’ll have to
find a big dowry to get you married’. And I - When I was very young I resented that
very much. But I didn’t know she was influenced by her cultural background. And I
disliked her for that. But she was a most loving woman any person could dream of
having for a mother. But we had this conflict for a long time. And I didn’t resolve it
as a teenager. It’s only later in my life I realized she was sincerely concerned about
my complexion.”
Rani, lines: 35-39, 60-69

“Things really got to a head and - Um. Mum bought me a Walkman, and I was so
happy. I listened to it all the time and everything. And my Mum had the hearing of,
like an elephant. She could hear something five streets away. Um. So anyway, one
night I was in the bedroom listening to it in bed, and Mum could obviously hear it in
the next room. And she just lost the plot. She, she just came into the room and she,
she jumped on my - Two knees into my back, and just started punching me in the
head. She ripped the Walkman out of my ears and threw it against the wall, and
smashed it. Um. Then she pulled my hair back, took the pillow from underneath my
head, then put it over my head. And put all her weight down”.
“My mother had a lawyer. And I’d left my diary at home, and my mother’s lawyer
used that. Read bits of that out to the court. I was cross-examined by him and, ah, the
prosecutor, the youth workers, the police officers, they knew my mother was lying
through her teeth. Even when she got up on the stand. ‘Oh. I’ve never laid a hand on
my daughter in my life’. And everybody knew she lied. Except for the Judge. And
the Judge looked at her and looked at me. And here I am this half-caste juvenile
delinquent, up against my mother. Middle class, you know, white Anglo-Saxon
Protestant. Good job. And the Judge wouldn’t renew the AVO. He just said, ‘Oh.
This is a sad situation. Mother and daughter should live together’.”
Ilisapeci, lines: 740-8, 841-59

6.1.2 Contributors

There was a variety of people who contributed information. This was to ensure
that all categories of stakeholders had some representation and to obtain a breadth of
opinions and ideas. With a spread of ages from twenties to sixties, educational levels from Year 9 to post-graduate qualifications, and the inclusion of CALD participants, it can be seen in table 6.1 that this representation was achieved.

Table 6.1: Comparison of Characteristics of Interviewees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approx. Age</th>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>First Language</th>
<th>Highest Education (To 6 years)</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>ACE Roles</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Ben</td>
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<td>Maltese</td>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>S, St</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>Melb. Aust</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Year 10 (then trade)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>St, V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Melb. Aust</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Sf, V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1: St is Student, Sf is Staff, V is Volunteer and CoM is Committee of Management.

Note 2: Age was the age at the time of the interview, e.g. Tom was interviewed in 2003 when 22 years, but was over 25 at the time the research was being documented.

Participants born overseas in English-speaking countries such as Gladys from Birmingham, England, and George from Auckland, New Zealand, and other states of Australia, like May from Tasmania and Mike from New South Wales, ensured that the interviewees were as diverse a group as was representative of MAE. So too was the percentage the people either born in Australia with parents speaking another language such as Ferhat, and those born overseas: Rani, Ben and Ilispeci. In this way, the interviews can be said to be representative regardless of employment or learning status. This representation occurred naturally because of the breadth of
difference which is a defining characteristic of local government areas such as Moreland with a very high percentage of both long term and new migrants plus pockets of unemployed and both blue and white-collar workers.

This variety demonstrated the aspect of MAE which made it a community of participants rather than a business or adult school with defined, antithetical roles as staff/student or paid/unpaid worker, or even a hierarchical status according to amounts of salary or positions based on qualification levels. This was not to deny that such categorisations existed as in any institution or program, but that the concept of the organisation being a community rather than a group of individuals each with a varying status or title became one of the main contentions of this research. This connectedness which created an inclusive community was the first real finding of the research.

6.2 ACE Connections

Two of the early and unexpected factors which were noted in relation to the interviewees, was the number who referred directly to having family members involved in ACE, and the recurrent stories told of moving between roles in the sector. Biddy, George, Lee, May and Rani were the only participants who did not mention other family members directly involved in ACE, although there was no question specifically asking for this information. Since the initial interview, however, Rani’s niece enrolled in two classes at MAE. Although Lee’s two young teenage daughters were not enrolled in ACE, they often attended and sat in on her classes, using the computers when she had nobody to care for them.
### Table 6.2: ACE Connections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years of Involvement</th>
<th>MAE Family Connections</th>
<th>Number of ACE organisations-mentions</th>
<th>Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 brothers in law</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Student to Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother in law</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biddy</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Student to Vol to Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferhat</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Student to CoM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Wife, Son, Sister in Law, Stepson</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vol to Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Student to CoM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladys</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Staff to CoM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilisapeci</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 Sisters, Brother in law, 3 Nephews, 1 Niece</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Student to Vol/CoM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jules</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vol to CoM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Son, Daughter</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Student to Staff to CoM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maeve</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>Daughter, Son in law</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vol to Student to Staff to CoM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Staff to CoM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Student to CoM to Vol to Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neen</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 Daughters</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Student to Staff to CoM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rani</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1 Niece</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Staff to Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mother, Brother, Brother in law, Cousin, Aunt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Student to Vol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Mother, Father, Brother, Partner, Aunt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vol to Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What had been evident in the surveys was reinforced in Table 6.2; that a number of participants engage in a long-term association with the organisation. A factor which quickly became evident was the longevity of connection as people moved between roles, which had first been noted in the surveys. Also, the engagement of other family members in the organisation indicated that the link was stronger because of the continuity and stability provided by the familial connection.

The multiplicity of roles undertaken by all but three of the participants (see Table 6.2) reinforced the outcomes of the survey which had provided this unexpected finding of the research. There was no single pathway between roles. Staff members
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became students and vice versa. A number of participants worked in paid capacities (Neen and Maeve) but had been volunteers either at MAE or other ACE organisations, while others had fulfilled the reverse roles (May and Gladys). Students joined as committee members as did paid staff and volunteers. This blurring and melding of roles was not only a feature of participants within MAE, but also occurred when people worked or attended other organisations, such as May who worked as a paid staff member at MAE and at two other ACE providers, as well as a committee member at a third. Mike had fulfilled a number of paid and unpaid roles at many venues. Ben worked at three ACE providers, but had also been a volunteer at a fourth, while Maeve had fulfilled four roles at MAE and was also on the management committee at a local neighbourhood house.

This multiplicity of roles was demonstrated by the fact that 17 of the 18 participants had at some point also enrolled as students (see Table 6.3 below). The most obvious reasons for this were the reduced cost of courses for staff, and the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training which became a compulsory acquisition for all assessing staff in order to pass a national audit. Of the eight participants who achieved this accreditation, five were already engaged as staff members, while one was a student who used it to gain employment as an ACE trainer. Two of those five staff members also enrolled in accredited multimedia units to enhance their IT teaching skills. Additional factors which formed this choice to enrol were the convenience of the location and knowing the trainers.
### Table 6.3 Enrolment in Courses as Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Enrolments at ACE</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>IT (Applications) – RMIT at MAE</td>
<td>AQF 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cert IV/Diploma in Further Education</td>
<td>AQF IV/V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment &amp; Workplace Training</td>
<td>AQF IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td>AQF IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Del</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferhat</td>
<td>Workplace Training (Cat 2)</td>
<td>AQF IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>IT (Applications) – RMIT at MAE</td>
<td>AQF 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment &amp; Workplace Training</td>
<td>AQF IV/V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladys</td>
<td>Assessment &amp; Workplace Training</td>
<td>AQF IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilisapeci</td>
<td>VCE units 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>AQF IV/V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>General computer access</td>
<td>Unaccredited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business — RMIT at MAE</td>
<td>AQF 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IT (Applications) — RMIT at MAE</td>
<td>AQF 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jules</td>
<td>VCE units 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>AQF 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>IT (Applications) — RMIT at MAE</td>
<td>AQF 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Cert IV/Diploma in Further Education</td>
<td>AQF IV/V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maeve</td>
<td>Women’s Writing</td>
<td>Unaccredited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VCE units 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>AQF IV/V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Assessment &amp; Workplace Training</td>
<td>AQF IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Units of IT (Multimedia)</td>
<td>AQF IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Assessment &amp; Workplace Training</td>
<td>AQF IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neen</td>
<td>IT (Applications) — RMIT at MAE</td>
<td>AQF 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment &amp; Workplace Training</td>
<td>AQF IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Units of IT (Multimedia)</td>
<td>AQF IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rani</td>
<td>Assessment &amp; Workplace Training</td>
<td>AQF IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>IT (Applications) — RMIT at MAE</td>
<td>AQF 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cert IV/Diploma in Further Education</td>
<td>AQF IV/V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment &amp; Workplace Training</td>
<td>AQF IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Train Small Groups unit</td>
<td>AQF IV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Levels of vocational education and training are indicated by AQF (Australian Qualifications Framework) where the levels equate to two being ‘entry’ level in employment and level five is a diploma.

The tables above (Tables 6.1-6.3) describe a connected and very diverse society of people in ACE where there was a long-term engagement in the sector and people fulfilled a multiplicity of roles created within a very family-oriented community.

These factors were the first indicators of the emergence of the more conceptual themes developed as the data from the interviews was analysed.
6.3 Seeking Information

The semi-structured interviews (Appendix 1:F) were originally intended to elicit a range of information broadly relating to ACE involvement and any instances of the interviewees’ perceptions of change.

After many hours of interviewing and taking notes, listening and re-listening to the tapes, reading and annotating each interview, their often iterative content raised a number of unpredicted outcomes. Not only did the personal questions provide the longest part of most interviews along with the initial findings of catharsis, inclusivity, longevity, mobility in relation to ACE engagement, and disadvantage in life, the reiteration of stories became one of the unpredicted outcomes.

With a possible 50 questions, 15 of which were asked of everyone, it was expected that the first 15 questions would take at least two-thirds of each taping with the balance depending on the number of categories in which the participants was involved. In every case—except Steve’s—the responses to the first two questions took up at least half of each interview. There appear to be three explanations for this result. The reason it was an unexpected outcome was that participants often began hesitantly and grew more confident by the middle of the interview, so it could be assumed the first questions should have elicited the brief answers.

First, people could talk about themselves more confidently given that there were few analyses or value-judgments to make, unlike for the rest of the questions.

Box 6.2: Discussing Being Accepted in ACE

“Yeah. I mean. It’s actually quite, you know, I mean, people feel comfortable because they hear people saying it and it’s OK for me to say something like this, you know.”

[When telling a story about observing bestiality as a child]
Ferhat, lines: 841-842.
Secondly, concentration tended to diminish—especially while taping one-to-one—which was exemplified by the number of participants who breathed a sigh of relief as the tape was turned off or commented on being ‘worn out’.

**6.4 Issues and Opinions of Interviewees**

The interviews had been expected to provide approximately equal amounts of data in each of the general and more targeted sections. However, the use of a blank diagram which had been developed to synthesis the data quickly demonstrated that there had been a substantive difference in the amount of time and the details which respondents gave to the first two questions. While some, such as Rani and Mike, gave equal attention and detail to all questions whether recounting personal experiences or evaluating change in the sector, others (Frank, Lee and Neen) gave few personal details but more analysis of ACE. Julie and Ilispeci’s interviews were very rich in personal detail, but demonstrated little interest in analysing later questions despite spending nine and eight respective years associated with the sector.

Given that the interviews were semi-structured, the participants were left to give as much or as little details as they preferred, apart from the obviously encouraging nods, repetitions and prompts which comprised all of the interviews and is typified in the example below.
Box 6.3: Example of the Interview Interactions

F: Ahm. OK. They were very cultural. They had no-I mean, they couldn’t speak English quite well, sort of thing. They sort of pressured me into religion a bit, my parents. Because my grandfather used to pray and my grandmother used to pray. Um, that did have an effect on the person I’ve become now, because I used to rebel against that, because I didn’t want to do it. I suppose because I didn’t understand it.

In: And that was Muslim culture? Yes? Yes.

F: Yes. Yes. So it was a very difficult time growing up, in that culture especially in Australia because it’s a conflict between the two, sort of thing. You’re stuck in the middle.

In: Mm. Your spoken English was fine though, wasn’t it?

F: Well English was fine. Yeah. But in terms of the religion there was that problem now and then.

Ferhat: lines 22-33

Note: “In” was the Interviewer

This imbalance of emphasis in interviews was extremely obvious from a comparison of the ‘mind-mapping’ exercise where the numbers of prolonged responses to the first two questions became evident in some participants while the concentration of detail was more equitable for others. This was demonstrated in two contrasting Figures (6.1 and 6.2, pp.225-226) based on the replies of Julie and May. For although some visual type of analysis was planned early in the research and described in the methodology, it became a major tool for sorting and understanding what often appeared to be a vast amount of incongruent data.
In the above figure, the emphasis of Julie’s interview can be seen to be heavily weighted toward detailed tales concerning herself and her family (19 main subjects), both of which give real insight to the lasting effects of poverty, low literacy, poor teaching and general lack of support and self confidence in childhood. When this was followed by marital violence and break-up combined with serious, ongoing health problems such as a young son with cancer and daughter with arthritis, re-engagement in learning played multiple roles in changing poor self esteem and reconnecting with a life outside of the worries and anxieties of her immediate family.
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life. In Julie’s case the enormous impact of a disadvantaged life dominated the interview.

**Figure: 6.2.** Representation of May’s responses

By comparison with Julie, May spent little time on the first two questions (the six main subjects), which are represented by the yellow circles. She too had a number of factors which disadvantaged her both in childhood, such as being raised by a sole parent—her father—and having limited support to engage in secondary education,
and later being divorced herself and raising a daughter. However, having returned to study and gained a degree and full-time employment, without the concerns of sick children and limited finances, May’s shifted emphasis to analysing the ACE sector, after scant repetition of family details. Simply, Julie’s first two questions resulted in 19 response factors whereas May’s had six. For the questions on ACE requiring an opinion or some analysis, the responses were six for Julie and 20 for May. For the additional alternative questions about special areas Julie had four responses and May eight—despite both having been in the sector in a number of roles, each with a knowledge or awareness of each of the areas.

By comparing the two diagrams, it was possible to get an immediate, visual sense of the content of the two interviews and the degree of personal narration completed by Julie, compared to the analytical and impersonal approach of May. There were a number of reasons for this comparison, such as that they had both been paid employees and students of MAE, both had undertaken volunteer work on committees of management (Julie at MAE and May at another organisation) and both had limited opportunities during their mainstream schooling, including economic disadvantage, lack of expectations, and non-completion of high school. Both had also experienced marriage breakdown as adults and were sole parents.

The difference between the two participants seemed to come from the multiplicity of ongoing disadvantages and the level of initial literacy which were contributing factors toward the need for catharsis and the confidence and skills to undertake analytical processes. The example of a similar contrast could have been made between other pairs such as Neen and Maeve both of whom had been volunteers, paid workers and committee members, yet placed very different emphasis and amounts of time on their interview question. In the same way Lee and Ilisapeci—
both students only—gave fundamentally opposing interviews both in amount of personal detail and weight of opinion on ACE.

**6.4.1 Recurring Perceptions and Images**

After these individual mappings of the interviews had been compared and contrasted both in the grid form of analysis (Appendix 1:L) and in the form of Figures 6.1 and 6.2, a total of 52 recurring ideas and issues initially emerged as themes. After the amalgamation of some obviously synonymous ideas—such as ‘registration’ with ‘scopes’, and also private, state and Catholic under ‘school-type’—48 themes remained to be categorised into themes which became ‘dimensions’ both to differentiate them from the recurring stylistic themes such as written and spoken narrative and to reflect the transformative ‘dimensions’ referred to by Mezirow and others in reference to transformative learning (Mezirow, 1978, 1991, 1997) (Cranton, 1994). These four dimensions were the People, Educational, Community and Business.

An original means for sorting the data (Appendix 1:M) also identified four major groupings of issues, opinions and perceptions of subjects which became dimensions, but Figure 6.3 also demonstrated at which stage the process of classifying into groups occurred.
Figure 6.3. Interview data grouped into initial 'Dimensions' (Also see alternative Figure in Appendix 1:M)
The grouping of the forty-eight themes into the four dimensions was demonstrated in Figure 6.3 (p. 229). Topics with a personal or family motif were coloured pink, education or leaning-related issues were blue, community or ACE were green and any business or economic factor was coloured green. This created a visual analysis of the thematic material for the later conceptual analysis.

There were some commonalities in the four major themes which emerged, for example, although Employment was allocated to ‘Business’, its effects on the personal lives of participants could have relocated it to ‘People’. However, during this research, none of the participants who mentioned poverty in their childhood had mentioned unemployment as being a childhood issue. While Julie and Gladys were quite specific about their family poverty, both had working fathers, and only Julie specified that having an unemployed husband caused later hardship, although a number of participants also mentioned unemployment as young adults (Ben, Steve and Ferhat) none mentioned it specifically in regard to poverty.

The initial process of sorting preliminary data into a framework created order from the mass of material resulting from the interviews. Integrating the survey, organisational comparison and interviews created the four dimensions of People, Community, Business and Education but also confirmed that commonalities of interviewees did exist and could be categorized into aspects, even though elicited from the very diverse group of people involved. This in turn reinforced the notion that MAE existed as a community of people who shared personal, cultural and attitudinal commonalities, and whose roles were not antithetical.

Although Figure 6.3 was later refined by removing two different factors as they were identified as ‘actions’ rather than the themes (see p.350), it created a means of grouping what were originally a mass of seemingly-unrelated factors and issues
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raised by interviewees. These actions were the reiteration of story-telling, and the reaction which was described in terms of attitudinal or emancipatory change or transformation.

6.5 Business

The effect of financial and business changes were two of the frequently recurring themes raised by interviewees, predominantly through references to funding, salaries, fees, stress and the high costs of IT and resources. Questions relating to changes in ACE often elicited angry responses in regard to conducting a business and dealing with related financial, quality and accountability issues.

Box 6.4: Biddy on Pressures in ACE

“I think the pressure on ACE organizations to be small businesses is a very mixed blessing too. Because if you bring in a corporate template to something that is not measured through the eyes of economic rationalism, it creates a huge sense of confusion and trying to bring together—trying to have two things that are actually quite contradictory co-exist. So it’s trying to do something impossible.”

Biddy, lines: 718-722.

6.5.1 Administrative Paperwork

One of the most frequently recurring motifs which occurred in relation to ACE was the massive increase in paperwork and all forms of record-keeping administration. This included the work and costs involved in insuring, registering, applying for funding, and undertaking quality assurance and accountability. This is not to say that people resented having to be accountable for funding, safety and the quality of their work, but that the volume and detail required by small organisations has grown out of all proportion. ACE centres need to produce the same quantity of business documentation for audits as the largest of the TAFEs while still providing the personal support and community development expected of community providers.
Box 6.5: Comments on Administrative Stress

“I don’t like all the paperwork. And it’s just an avalanche of paperwork. And so much repetition of the paperwork. And such a waste of time with bureaucratic stuff sometimes. I understand that there has to be a certain amount. And, you know, all these audits and things that keep coming up. And they just take the time.”
Jane: lines 585-599

“I don’t know any other job where you would do in one day, cover such a range of tasks. You’re so multi-skilled in the roles that … if you went and worked in any other sector, like you’d be the CEO of some great company. It’s the range of skills that you actually—even though it’s mind blowing and it kind of does you in sometimes, it makes, creates a lot of stress.”
May, lines: 220-222, 423-430

Mike, May, Biddy, Gladys and Julie were also vocal in terms of the increased business requirements and responsibilities facing the sector in 2004 and 2005. Frank concurred when asked what he did not like about the changes to ACE; he responded that the worst aspect was the pressure and amount of stress it puts on managers.

Gladys had no doubt that ‘bureaucrats’ were causing the pressure to produce such amounts of administrative documentation because they had hijacked the sector dictating what could be delivered, removing flexibility and the ability to change what courses to deliver and how to deliver them. She felt the demands of bureaucracy were slowly diminishing the real work of the sector which was to combine education with community development. Unlike Gladys, Mike and Tom were more concerned with the corporate than bureaucratic aspects.
“Oh their bureaucratic requirements now—the corporate requirements, because I don’t actually think bureaucracy is bad. The corporate requirements are the same for a small community based organisation of volunteers with a couple of a hundred people, as it is for the university that I served for thirty or twenty odd years. There’s as much paperwork involved.”

Mike: lines 449-453

“One of the bad things is just not quite having the structure of corporate environments. Being—working in a lot of private companies myself, I was experienced in the type of structure they have. And just seeing that behind the scenes of how community type organisations run. They don’t seem as well structured or as focused as others.”

Tom: lines 113-117

Although paid employees could see the administrative demands being made on the sector, even volunteers and students such as Jane, Lee, Ferhat and George had also picked up on the demands, expressing sympathy for teachers and management.

Most of the salaried workers’ complaints about administration referred to a range of teaching and curriculum records plus the necessity for coaxing low literacy students through the requirements of student satisfaction forms. From 2005 these were online through the OTTE website for ACFE-funded classes—although organisations could print them for students and then fill out the forms online—creating a triple level of handling where administrative workers printed and copied forms, teachers and students discussed them, then they had to be returned to the office so that the administration workers completed them online.

This process was manifestly inadequate for a number of reasons. Firstly, ACE organisations such as MAE had very high percentages of linguistically diverse students and people with intellectual, psychiatric and physical disabilities. Others had minimal literacy skills and enrollees with low confidence while few had the ability to engage in online evaluations. Even more participants were just as intimidated by
print-based versions. These students were demoralised and again marginalised from
the feedback process. Secondly, the students may not ask their teachers to assist with
critical comments both out of politeness and because other students may hear their
words. Thirdly, students allowed to take the forms home rarely returned them as they
were often reluctant to ask a relative or friend to assist with another chore on their
behalf. Fourthly, the whole administrative process was extremely expensive in terms
of administrative hours, photocopying, paper and printer ink, or additional online
hours. And lastly, because of the possibility of alienating students, organisations
asked teachers of advanced students to undertake the process and the teachers tended
to only give forms to advanced students with the ability to complete them online.
Thus any data being analysed by—and disseminated from—OTTE and ACFE
regarding the satisfaction of students was not regarded as accurate by practitioners,
although it was often quoted by researchers from outside the field.

Other administrative tasks for the teaching staff included a range of records
depending on whichever department funded the course. For example, Ben, a
computer trainer at MAE, was employed to conduct three ACFE-funded computer
classes, and three different classes funded by RMIT from different sources (two
funded through different departments as part of the LearnLinks program and a third
through the Microsoft Unlimited Potential). Yet the course records, rolls and
reporting requirements were totally different for each, creating an administrative
mine-field for a casual worker.

For Monday evenings and Thursday mornings, Ben was expected to keep a
course folder with a specific pink roll-form each term, have students complete pink
‘Nrolls’ enrolment forms, keep copies of all assessment tasks he had devised, plus a
signed and dated example of student work for each unit of the course. On Wednesday
afternoons, Ben kept another set of RMIT records for the Access department for the Certificate of General Education, faxing the roll every month and keeping copies of assessment tasks and student work in folders. Monday afternoons he kept white enrolment forms for RMIT’s Business faculty, another roll and copies of all online assessment tasks with white cover sheets which were also signed and dated. This set was mailed to the department. On Thursday afternoons, he kept a roll on an Excel spreadsheet, had students complete yellow (UP) enrolments forms and do course evaluations, as he wrote up one case study per term, or completed a monthly spreadsheet, both of which were emailed to Learnlinks.

As Ben worked as a sessional trainer at two other ACE organisations in the northern region where he delivers classes specifically to youth in one centre and seniors in another, this load could be estimated at double his administration at MAE.

Box 6.7: Ben on TAFE’s Perceptions of ACE

“Especially when, you know, they just don’t think that you’ve got anything to do so they will ask you for these reports not, not sort of considering, well hey, you know, you’ve got as much probably paperwork and administration to do regarding other things and actually training the students and stuff like that.”

“I can’t say there is actually anything good within the administration. I think it’s very poorly administered …you feel you’re doing your documents and paperwork just to keep someone happy at RMIT. … I think through RMIT’s eyes and I think probably through a lot of large TAFEs is that ACE is seen like, as the bottom of the barrel education. And, hey, these people aren’t coming to RMIT, they mustn’t be as good. And although that’s never really probably said openly, I think that it is a perception that sort of goes around”.

Ben, lines: 676-679, 601-604, 672-675

Rani’s record-keeping requirements—“shuffling of papers”—were also different for ACFE-funded language classes and a VCE class, even though only at Levels 1 and 2 and without exams. Like Ben, her ACFE-funded language courses required a pink roll and ‘Nrolls’ enrolment form, examples of student work for each
unit, signed and dated, an outcomes form and claim for certification. Although also funded by ACFE, the VCAA requirements for the VCE modules—in addition to those of the language classes—required additional signed enrolment forms, and results had to be entered online.

Most of the sessional teachers at MAE shared these problems as they were employed to teach classes funded by multiple sources. In 2004, teachers like Ben and Rani may have been employed to teach classes funded by any combination of the following: ACFE, AMEP/DIMIA, three different kinds of RMIT courses, ‘Fee-for-Service’, the Multimedia Victoria ‘MC2’ project, OTTE’s volunteer training course for the Commonwealth Games or a Community Hubs project. Each had its own set of administrative records and each required different reporting for outcomes and results by the manager or administrative workers.

In addition, for the manager—assisted by the administrative workers—all students had to be entered on a variety of databases (Nrolls, VCAA and ARMs) and verified each term before final submissions of validated outcomes and results.

For management the never-ending piles of business plans; strategic plans; managing diversity, risk management and OH & S plans; operating manuals; student books; annual reports; staff contracts and performance appraisals; curriculum documents and preparation of audit materials created a full-time role which had increasingly alienated managers from staff, volunteers and students alike. This was one of the mostly commonly identified problems associated with change, identified by both the ACE survey respondents and 11 of the MAE interviewees.
Box 6.8: Business Demands

“The language has been, it’s been businessified. I’m not too sure commercialized or whatever. … People are confused by the language. And I remember ten years ago, we were asked for our strategic plan. And I went into a spin. And I’m thinking we haven’t got one, we haven’t got one. And then later I found out it was—we always had a three year or a five year plan.”
Gladys, lines 1518-1522

“I don’t like the way it’s moving away from being people orientated. And more outcomes orientated. I don’t like all the paperwork. And it’s just an avalanche of paperwork. And so much repetition of the paperwork. And such a waste of time with bureaucratic stuff sometimes. I understand that there has to be a certain amount. And, you know, all these audits and things that keep coming up. And they just take the time.”
Jane, lines: 581-598

The constant pressure to maintain AQTF-compliant rolls, cover sheets, examples of student work, folders, assessment tasks and moderation with different requirements for different funding, created a heavy workload for ACE administrators such as May who has since taken on that role after completing work at MAE as a project worker.

Many of the participants also mentioned factors related to finances. These included complaints over salary rates compared with TAFE (Rani, Ben, May) although Neen, who worked as both in office administration and a trainer in beginning computer courses, thought the salary was fine, especially when compared with her pay rate in another administrative job. In their present or former positions as managers, Gladys and May were extremely irate at the poor working conditions for ACE workers, replicating some of the comments which had been repeated by survey respondents from the wider ACE community in the northern suburbs.
“And I think it’s—it upsets me in my role now particularly. It always has that I can’t offer teachers, holidays, sick leave, any of that sort of—those conditions. And I think that’s what I don’t like. They’re not paid for holidays, they don’t get sick leave, I can’t guarantee them employment from one year to the next. Although supposedly we can for the next three years. Although in fact we can’t because we could face up to a 9 or 12% cut, genuine cut. I mean they say 3% a year, but that actually translates into a lot more than that. So I don’t, I can’t—next year I can offer my teachers stuff, work, but the year after that, I still can’t guarantee them."

“Fundamentals haven’t changed in that you’re working on the smell of an oily rag. You’ve got to—You’re dealing with the issues of staff. And you’ve got to support staff. Staff—I would say that just trying to get the best out of your staff. Trying to keep some continuity for students and for the organization by retaining staff. … That’s one of the things I hate about ACE actually. It doesn’t provide a career structure for anybody”.

“Very few people can work full-time in the ACE sector. So a lot of people very reluctantly leave the ACE sector and go to the TAFE sector, for better working conditions.”

May made repeated mentions of the cuts to funding which was also commented on by Ben and Mike but was unknown by students and many volunteers. The 3% annual cuts—as mentioned by May—pointed out that these reductions effectively reduced funding by 6% per annum for 3 years.

“I don’t like, I guess, the resourcing levels, the funding structures of the different funding bodies. We’re all responding to two or three at least, main funding bodies with all different accountability structures. So that makes your job a nightmare.”

“The cut occurred when in 2003, the State government capped the allocation of funding to the sector. And then each year used 2003 as the base grant. And only increased it by an arbitrary Consumer Price Index figure, not the full figure. So there was no recognition of change or growth for future infrastructure in the funding that the State government allocated to Further Education.”
Concerns about increasing fees and charges were raised by eight of the interviewees although they were not yet aware that the concession rate was to rise by one dollar again in 2006 as the result of Ministerial Direction to Regional Councils of ACFE (ACFEB, 2005b). While these rises seemed small, many of the interviewees with health or concession cards—such as Lee, George, Ilisapeci, Steve, Gladys, Maeve, Jane and Julie—all spoke about the cost of education, while sole parents such as Lee and Steve were anxious about prioritising other family expenditure over their own education, decreasing educational opportunities yet again to those least able to pay.

Five of the interviewees specifically referred to low costs as being one of the strongest influences in their ability to re-engage in education, and whether or not they were able to gain the fee concession was a major decision-making factor.

Interviewees Jane, George, Ben, Ferhat and Ilisapeci each made more than one reference to finances along with increased costs, while Jane, Gladys and Ilisapeci specifically referred to how being unemployed and needing to conform to Centrelink’s demands placed pressure on their—already difficult—lives. Despite being 59 years old, Jane worked as a volunteer at both MAE and the Citizen’s Information Centre in order to keep receiving benefits, while Gladys deplored the fact that participation in an education program had become reportable to the ‘dole office’ and asked why should student who happen to find themselves unemployed have to have their attendance reported on, referring both to herself during this temporary phase of unemployment, and to people who had been ACE students.

Ilisapeci felt that the other adult students attending her diploma course at RMIT had no idea of basic social survival, like dealing with Centrelink, which she saw as a challenge and George was resentful that he had no support from Centrelink because
he was caught in a Workcover insurance case, often having no money for food and having to rely on relatives because he was trapped between dual systems.

All six of the above-mentioned interviewees expressed strong resentment of this sense of being subjected to unfair observation of their lives without having given just cause, simply because they suffered from health issues or were unable to find work they were physically able to undertake. Gladys referred to the former term ‘dole’, George spoke negatively of Centrelink on two occasions, Ilisapeci raised the subject of unemployment and Centrelink three times, while Jane mentioned Centrelink four times during her interview, giving some indication of its importance in their lives.

Box 6.11: Unemployment Issues

“And I find that’s horrible. Because, why should some student who happens to find themselves unemployed have to have their attendance reported on?”
Gladys, lines: 1305

“That’s the thing. I mean, you’ve got to learn to rely on yourself. You know. How to deal with situations, and even things like dealing with Centrelink. Stuff like that.”
Ilisapeci, lines: 1847-1853

“They were forced to make the decision. You’re screwed for everything. They were against me. Yeah.”
George, lines: 624-632

Other costs which were of concern to those interviewees who had been either managers or committee members (such as May, Neen, Gladys and Jane) were those associated with maintaining insurance for directors, volunteers, property, paid workers and public liability for students. This was of great concern to committees of management because of the large cost involved and a real fear that people who had undertaken unpaid work could, in some way, be financially or physically at risk. This fear may also have explained the lessening of numbers of volunteers identified by both Gladys and Mike.
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Box 6.12: Jane on Financial Responsibilities of Volunteers

“I think that government thing sort of put people off. If you know, where volunteers were, they said they were liable for things. And people got very nervous. But they’re still nervous. … People just got frightened.”

Jane, lines: 871-875

Costs associated with risk management action plans and OH&S expenses were noted by four interviewees. This was particularly so when people reported issues which were beyond the means of the organisation to repair—for example, the problem associated with the heat in the main class rooms which had resulted in the expense of $16,000 to the organisation. There was a real fear that reporting risks associated with being tenants in other peoples’ buildings could lead to the loss of low cost accommodation and no place to conduct classes. Gladys was particularly irate about the necessity for ACE organisations to have to use sub-standard buildings or to suffer physical danger, discomfort or anxiety over loss of a ‘home’.

Another worry expressed by Ben, Ferhat, Neen and Frank concerned the purchasing and upgrading of resources such as information technology, to maintain delivery of relevant computer courses to students without access to technology. These four interviewees were particularly concerned about the need for—and cost of—constantly upgrading both hardware and software for students so that ACE would not lose its credibility by comparison with TAFEs. Frank pointed out that the annual IT budget for upgrades at a northern suburbs secondary school where he had worked was over $50,000 whereas at MAE—where he also worked for a few hours each week—the Commonwealth Equipment Grant for 2005 from ACFE had been reduced from $3,800 in 2004 to $3,300 in 2005. In terms of usage, the secondary
school had nearly 1,000 students whereas MAE’s total of enrolled students was over 600.

Box 6.13: ACE Resourcing

“I think there is a big difference and primarily when it goes down to the funds. You know, when I was involved with the corporate training organisations the equipment was never an issue. I mean they were—the students who came and attended all worked on lap tops, all had the latest software, the latest operating systems. They had, the trainers were equipped with, you know, overheads, you know attached to their lap top in each classroom so that they could demonstrate what they were doing. So the equipment was never a problem because of the amount of money they had.”
Ben, lines: 396-402

“You’ve got to keep up-to-date, especially the programs and things. The universities tend to have more money to keep things up-graded. And ACE classes like ours, I think you’ve got to push or lower the standards and hope it will fit the programs you have here available.”
Neen, lines 432-435

6.5.2 Audits and Quality

However one of the most frequently expressed concerns was about both the expense of, and time involved in, undertaking multiple audits and re-registrations. National registration as an RTO cost $500 annually, and each time a certificate was added to the registration, an additional fee to the Training Recognition Consultant of approximately $250 per qualification was due. This was best exemplified by two different situations which occurred in 2005. Firstly, the new training package for workplace training (Certificate IV and Diploma in Training and Assessment, known as ‘TAA’) was introduced. As Mike explained, MAE had been conducting this course since the original Certificate IV in Workplace Training (Category 2) in 1998, upgrading to the Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment some years later. The new TAA was not simply rolled over to the new qualification, but was treated as a new course. This involved writing up an application for ‘scope’—like a
licence—which includes a full delivery and assessment plan, and additional
documentation plotting resources and trainers experience and qualifications against
each unit. Because of unexplained problems granting the scopes to organisations,
after an initial group, few organisations were successful in gaining registration to
congrad the course. Although MAE gained the scope in August 2005—well before
most ACE-RTO organisations in Victoria—it took three revisions and cost over
$3000 to purchase the curriculum, pay for scope and buy the necessary resources.

The second instance occurred with the re-accreditation of the Library
Information Systems qualification. The cost included purchasing the new training
package and supporting resources for both core and elective units. In terms of time,
liasing with library consultants and the documentation of the delivery and
essment plans and all supporting documentation for AQF levels II, III, IV, and V
took well over three weeks of work (Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Business
Plan, Version 6, 2004).

For 2005, the monetary cost of renewing registration and purchasing training
packages plus supporting resources was approximately 2% of the whole annual
budget (MAE, 2005). In terms of paid time, the work of writing new scopes would
have represented the equivalent of over three weeks’ work, which explains why May
ferred to ‘scopes’ four times in her interview and Biddy said that ACE
organisations would have to come to terms with choices of how and what to deliver
to ensure sustainability.
Box 6.14: ACE’s Limited Delivery Options

“Yes, we are smaller so we don’t have a range of options at each environment. Across the sector we can offer the range, but we might have to refer people on. Small providers can’t offer everything or have everything in their scope. …People have extended their scopes of registration a fair bit, to offer - to include courses that are quite current now.”
May, lines: 205-206, 264-265

“Well, what I do see is people having to make really difficult decisions, people who are working in ACE organizations. … Having to make really difficult decisions about the direction the ACE organization is going to go in. Because I see a lot more - a much greater range of choices and pressures. And people can’t do all things. … And I see those as very painful choices.”
Biddy, lines: 399-410

“And you’d have to have the same compliance standards for a small ACE provider who ran two or three courses as you did for a big TAFE that had the infrastructure and resources to respond to that. That was huge, and that eventually last year is what, partly what did me in, is having to respond to all of that. Which I see on one hand was very positive. We’d all have to be, have the same quality and we have to be compliant. But I think that the lack of resourcing to support us in that, was a huge impact in the last eighteen months.”
May: lines 445-451

For MAE in one year, this meant an ACFE-re-registration audit, an annual financial audit for the previous year to be completed by March, an AQTF audit in March, ANTA/DEST audit in April, RMIT audit in October and notification to expect a NEAS (DIMIA) audit. For those organisations like MAE who delivered the new Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA), this also meant a compulsory additional audit during the year after its implementation. Ben, Rani, Gladys and May made repeated references to audits and Biddy also referred specifically to getting the AQTF preparation completed. While not denying the necessity for quality control and accountability, the amount of preparation and the number of audits a number of interviewees expressed the opinion that this seemed excessive, repetitious and engaged multiple workers for a large percentage of their worktime.
Even after not working in the ACE sector as a manager for some years, Gladys recalled her memories of a re-registration audit with audible and visible indignation.

Box 6.15: Bureaucratic Disregard for ACE Issues

“We got flooded out. We were in a rented building. A sub-standard building. We had not a lot of money. So therefore that was all we could afford. And we were, you know, sort of—The people who owned the building had told us that they’d fixed the roof where the water was coming in, whatever. Now, that week that we had the flood was also when we had to have our very first ACFE audit. I’m talking about … Yes. The re-registration or whatever. I rang the regional manager who was coming out to do the audit. And I couldn’t understand why the regional manager wanted to audit us. But, anyway, she did. And I said could we—We’d just been flooded out. All our files are soaking wet. We had the carpets, apart from being an OH&S issue, we shouldn’t have been in the building anyway with all the mouldy stuff going around. I said could we postpone the audit. And she refused. And she—And so as well as being, having everything, you know, all over the place trying to—Staff were upset because they’re not going to get paid because we couldn’t deliver courses. Trying to work out different ways that solved everything. And on top of that, this person, this bureaucrat, was so out of touch with what it’s like to be in a community sector, insisted on carrying out that audit.”

Gladys: lines 1664-1694

6.5.3 Qualifications

As was identified in the survey, staff members at ACE centres were expected to be at least as qualified as in mainstream sectors which caused a number of complaints both in the surveyed people and in the interviews for two reasons. Firstly, a number of people made comments that they resented having to complete the Workplace Training qualification (Rani, Gladys and Neen) although Ben and Ferhat both found it useful and said that it made them more employable. Ferhat explained with a laugh that it had gained him many jobs. Secondly, highly qualified staff members such as Rani with an MA and post-graduate qualifications in education, resented not being employable (unless she obtained the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace
Training) in a sector where staff members are often seen as unqualified, and being paid salaries commensurate with both their studies and TAFE teachers, as she explained.

Box 6.16: ACE Staff Qualifications

“And so when I went to the Neighbourhood House, ‘S’ looked at all my qualifications and she said ‘Look. This is fantastic. But’. And I said ‘What is the but about’? She said ‘I’m a stickler for having the records right. Unless you do a Post-graduate Diploma or—at that time, General Certificate of teaching English as a Second Language—you cannot step into my classroom’.”

“And I think, ‘Who’s going to look into all of this’? Is it, you know, ACE is now beginning to say ‘It’s so hard to get the tutor and hold onto the tutor’. Because they’re tempted. They’ve got the same qualifications. They get $19 more than what we get. And why would they stay?”

Rani, lines: 420-424, 831-834

6.5.4 Accreditation and Certification

One of the most contentious issues raised by the interviewees related to the accreditation of courses, which a number of people felt was due to bureaucratic and economic—rather than educational—pressures. A number of people—Gladys, Frank, Tom, Rani, Mike, Ferhat, Jane and Neen—all made comments on whether or not students gained some kind of certification for a course they had undertaken. While the younger men—Ferhat and Tom—were both enthusiastic about the reasons for undertaking accredited courses in terms of enhanced employment opportunities, both Rani and Gladys made negative comments about accreditation which they felt was unnecessarily imposed on many older students.
Box 6.17: Comments on Accreditation

“For example, having an accredited course puts this additional pressure of having to make them do something that they really - Even though you say, you know, you say ‘Yes I want to be assessed’. ‘No I don’t want to be assessed’. But if I had a whole class saying ‘No’, your funding will go down the drain. … To most of them, the piece of document means nothing. They say ‘We don’t want to go to university’. … Now it’s more regimented. Like if I’m doing CSWE and then, you know, sometimes - Well they don’t have to teach all that grammar. But we have to, because one of the performance criteria is ‘Has the student used past tense in three different forms of past tense?’ Like past perfect, present continuous or something like that.”

“They have to write four hundred words in Level 2 and two hundred to four hundred words in Level 3. End of Level 3. And two hundred words in Level 1. None of my students would be able to. I mean, why are we so pedantic?”
Rani, lines: 683-702, 707-709

“The people are just going to say ‘Stuff this accreditation and this straight jacketing of learning. Let’s go back. And why can’t we design our own course’?”
Gladys, lines: 1479-1481

In general, success and a positive attitude to schooling often seemed to have no simple cause but resulted from a fortuitous grouping of environmental and personal attributes. A supportive attitude and a stable family of any kind, initial grasp of literacy or the quick acquisition of another language, good health and a reasonable level of educational encouragement all seemed to result in good learning environments and immediate access to tertiary study for a small number of participants (Frank, Biddy, Tom, Rani). For the other fourteen, poverty, lack of encouragement, low language and literacy, the necessity to earn money, family breakdown, health issues and violence all contributed to making the education of the majority of interviewees difficult or necessitating a struggle against disadvantage.
6.5.5 Volunteerism

The new volunteers in ACE were often different from the volunteers of 1994, with the emphasis switching from charitable perceptions of doing good, or community awareness of ‘putting back’ and ‘helping out’, to economic factors. Mike was an early volunteer in NSW. He described his first voluntary involvement with an elderly mature-aged student to whom he acted as a mentor while at university.

Maeve was one of the earliest volunteers at MAE, having commenced in 1985 when most of the volunteers underwent a six-week course before being matched with adults with low levels of literacy. These adult students were all either English-speakers, or people educated in local schools although their parents had migrated the Australia before they were born. Jules commenced volunteering at MAE in the late 1980s and became committee member at a rural centre ten years later after relocating.

Box 6.18: ‘Old’ Voluntary Tutors

“It was just teaching people, like doing little voluntary classes of two or one-on-one and even though you didn’t have the stuff to be able to tell them what. You didn’t have things to work with a lot in those days or any thing like that. You just had sort of potluck in what you taught and what you knew. It wasn’t bad. They tried hard and meant well and that was just the start of it.”

“Well it’s totally different now. … A lot—well most of the influence—is migrant, we don’t have a lot of the native speaking people that need to read and write. We used to have a lot more of that.”

Maeve, lines: 176-180

“Now they expect us all to be business savvy instead of people wanting to socialise and help. We have to submit a resume and be interviewed and have police checks—which is fair enough when there’s childcare. It’s all become very professional but I think they’ve thrown the baby out with the bathwater as people who just want to help are being lost because they are intimidated.”

Jules, lines: 173-177

“I think that ACE has less volunteers now than it used to. … I think it’s because of the corporatisation of the sector, of the requirements. Volunteers, volunteers will always help out with things. But it requires people who have some expertise to be able to do the day-to-day activities now.”

Mike, lines: 664-667
Of the 18 interviewees, 13 had undertaken either tutoring or administrative work in an unpaid capacity or become voluntary members of committees—many had done both. Others—such as Neen, Frank and May—had undertaken unpaid hours of mentoring or administrate tasks in addition to their paid work.

One of the drivers to become a volunteer in the 2004-5 years was the necessity to do at least 16 hours of volunteer work in order to maintain Centrelink payments for a range of recipients, mainly in the 50+ age bracket. In her interview, Jane described this requirement somewhat resentfully in terms of “the Centrelink factor” as she had been a carer for years having been otherwise unemployed, and being aged in her late fifties, found it difficult to find a job—even with a post-graduate qualification.

Other recent volunteers did so to get additional experience on their resumes. Some offered to work for nothing to be in an advantageous position should paid work arise. As a manager, May described the current situation of working with young modern volunteers very well.

Box 6.19: ‘New’ Voluntary Tutors

“Although in my last bout of actually interviewing for volunteers, it was a completely different batch of volunteers. They were--and I actually sought volunteers on the Internet—which gave me a whole different range because for one they were already computer savvy. They very much had their own path planned out and that—there were still a few in that, that were quite, you know, were coming for a different reason. But there were people that—the people we ended with were working on their Masters or their Ph.D.—they were academics who had no practical work experience, twenty-three year old academics who had never worked a day in their life. So they’re—that’s a new breed of volunteers that are coming to ACE because they’re actually getting some very good people skills and work experience that will then go onto their CV along with their Ph.D. or whatever it is, and make them really viable.”

May: 361-372

This was not to say that people such as George, Neen and Mike, did not undertake altruistic volunteer work. However, more employment-minded people
applying brought a new professionalism to the role, where resumes and interviews were required, professional development was offered instead of the old 6 week volunteers course, and expectations were then created of improved work performance. May described this time-consuming and not always effective process on a number of occasions.

6.6 Education

Most of the interviewees described their learning in terms of discrete categories dependent on the institution they were attending at the time. None of them mentioned learning as a lifelong process undertaken in informal as well as formal settings. Because the interviewees defined their learning according to primary and secondary and tertiary sectors—with ACE fulfilling an additional role combining non-educational functions—these categories have been used in the following discussion. The section concludes by discussing themes such as sport and incidents which influenced attitudes to education.

6.6.1 Primary and Secondary

Participants were quite clear about their attitudes to the schooling of childhood and mainly fell into three categories which reflected not only positive educational experiences but also the supportive and encouraging attitudes which fostered them within their family circles. Seven of the interviewees liked schooling and found learning easy. Of the seven, Tom was the most positive and in the quotation below, continued the theme of good fortune which he had discussed in relation to his family—especially regarding his older siblings whose influence on his life he felt had always been positive and added to his confidence and sociability. Six others enjoyed aspects of their schooling but for a range of different reasons from finding it easy to learn because of a retentive memory (Frank and Mike), to being
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inspired by the nuns (Biddy), the enjoyment of peer sociability (Ferhat, Tom and Lee) to love of sport (George and Lee).

Box 6.20: Positive Reflections on Schooling

“Yeah. Breezed through it. I had a good memory, so it suited me down to the ground.”
Frank, lines: 117-124

“I was very lucky in everything that I always did. I—I’ve always managed to coast through life without too many difficulties being thrown my way. A lot of things in schooling and everything, I’ve always found quite easy myself. … Got on with all the kids. And a lot of the kids were from different backgrounds to me. Which sort of helped me get along with a lot of different backgrounds, being in an area like Moreland, there was a lot of Muslim-type kids. And always got along really well with a lot of those guys and knock about with them.”
Tom, lines: 258-60, 273-278

Six interviewees were very clear in their attitudes to the two sectors, enjoying primary level but disliking secondary. These were Jane, Ben, Neen, Jules, May and George, who—despite enjoying the positive aspects of being good at sport—said he had been a ‘bad boy’ at high school, and was an early school-leaver due to both behavioural problems and difficulties at home with a step-parent.

Only Jane, who also quite liked her primary years, quoted two negative experiences, firstly of coming from a family where the children were never hit, of being smacked for the first time in her life, and of her final year she joked about having a teacher called Mr Savage who was ‘Savage by name and savage by nature’ which was not conducive to learning. Jules summed up most people’s memories of primary schooling suggesting people forget the negativity and only recall that at primary level everyone seemed kind, but as the stories below indicate, this did not hold true for some interviewees.
Box 6.21: Negative Memories of Schooling

“But the funny thing is that I can still remember when I was in ‘Bubs’. We were lined up at the door. And the teacher, someone was talking, and she smacked my leg. And I wasn’t the one talking. Do you know that rankles me to this day? ...”
Jane, lines: 108-111

“I remember one incident where the teacher left the room and, I’ll never forget this, he said ‘no one’s allowed out of your desks’. He came back and caught me and I was out of my desk. And I had to hold the back of his jacket while he walked up the passageway into another room -classroom because it was the library. And me holding the back of his jacket. And I never got any rest after that. It was quite embarrassing.”
Neen, lines: 96-101

“I do remember this as a Second Grader. For some reason Year 2 classes were in the —Um—one of the rec. rooms. And I don’t know. We were talking about bad behaviour or something and—Um. The teacher asked me, ‘What would you do in this situation?’ I remember piping up, ‘Well, I’d take off the kids shoes and beat them around the head with them’. ... And the teachers just looked at me. None of the kids looked at me.”
Ilisapeti, lines: 599-607

Although—despite Mr Savage—Jane felt generally positive about her primary schooling, the quote below demonstrated the strength of her negativity toward secondary schooling. Although she had no problem learning, had passed her matriculation (in 1964), and her subsequent post-secondary career was as a qualified librarian, these factors gave no indication of the strength of her unexpected response.

Box 6.22: Jane on Secondary School

“Well, nothing got me ready for high school. As soon as I entered the building, I was a fish out of water. And I hated every minute of it.”
“I’m sort of very anti, with my high school experience. I was—I don’t like that formal education.”
Jane, lines: 142-3, 420-422

Because she was a quiet, self-contained woman whose other comments during the interview—except also in relation to Centrelink—were moderate, the vehemence of her response gave it real emphasis. Her attitude also reflected the different reasons
people continue their educational years in ACE, when despite a supportive family and tertiary qualifications, women like Julie chose to become connected to an ACE centre. This could be as a student, committee member or to undertake other unpaid voluntary activities because of a preference for an informal learning environment which did not recall negative memories of former education.

Three of the interviewees actively disliked all schooling: Julie, Ilisapeci and Maeve, due to a range of personal and family circumstances.

Box 6.23: Destructive Memories of Schooling

“...I was only 15 when I left. I wasn’t very good at school. I found school a bit of a—I didn’t like exams, I didn’t like school, I didn’t like the study, and I didn’t like anything about it. My mother, my mother always had great plans, my brother offered to send me on to anywhere, but. And I was always surrounded by books and things at home, but I just didn’t like school, I didn’t like the structure of it - of school having to go and—being told.”

Maeve: lines119-125

“I think the nuns always favoured the ones that could actually—Like the richer parents that could actually add more to the fete or, you know, donate this and donate that.”

“I found was really hard because, I mean, if you haven’t got the background of it. You can’t do what you’re doing now if you don’t know what you did last week. And I mean, I was doing what I was doing, what the lesson was today. But I didn’t know where I was going with that. Because I didn’t have last week’s. So I’d have to go - And I think that turned me off school too.” (Re absenteeism from illness)

Julie, lines: 116-118, 490-493

“And then I went to several different high schools. Um. My Mum pulled me out of Manly Selective High. She wasn’t happy. Put me into Mont Sant’Angelo College Catholic Girls School. I got expelled from there three quarters of the way through Year 9.”

Ilisapeci, lines: 431-432

Steve had no trouble learning but was horrifically bullied at high school as the only ‘Aussie’ in the class, and left in year 11 to start an apprenticeship. Rani’s attitude to schooling was extremely positive but her education was complex as it
involved three different languages and two countries as she travelled to India from Malaysia three times a year to be educated in Tamil and English at a private ‘Hill Station’ school.

The reasons behind this tripartite grouping of people’s attitudes to schooling were not obvious but revolved around the liking for school as the questions were intended to gain knowledge of the positive or negative perceptions of schooling, rather than make some participants nervous by asking about outcomes and results.

However, although Biddy, Frank and Tom had very positive schooling experiences, secondary schooling saw many very negative comments from other interviewees due to a range of factors from bullying and racism (Steve, Ilisapeci), through lack of peer approval (Ben, Neen) to the whole structure of the schooling experience (Jane, Julie, Jules and Maeve). Lack of engagement in learning leading to behavioural problems in George, Ilisapeci and May and learning difficulties for Julie and Jules, compounding their attitudes to education and colouring it negatively until they later re-engaged as adults returning to study both in ACE centres and at TAFE institutes.

6.6.2 Tertiary Education

Questions about post-primary education became more and more complex because of the variety of possibilities involved. Initially, ‘University’ (or Higher Education) and TAFE were the two categories but others included vocational training such as those undertaken by Julie (office), Mike (retail traineeship) and later by Gladys (teaching) and Jules (nursing).

There were a number of sub-categories to each of the tertiary sectors, such as undergraduate and postgraduate, AQF levels from II to V (vocational levels of the Framework), and some confusion about the equivalent AQF levels of apprenticeships.
and vocational courses undertaken more than 10 years ago. Postgraduate studies included both certificates and diplomas. Figure 6.4 (p. 256) depicts the movement between sectors and how ACE participants moved in and out of the sector as they needed.

Some interviewees, such as Steve, had very complex educational pathways. He had completed an apprenticeship after year 11 and worked for 15 years in the hospitality trade. After an accident he enrolled in the Diploma of Further Education and RMIT’s Certificate II in Information Technology at MAE and then pathwayed into RMIT’s Electronic Publishing course before returning to MAE to complete the Certificate in Assessment and Workplace Training.

Box 6.24: Steve’s Positive Memories of Vocational Training

“And in my third year I went to William Angliss in the city. And that was a TAFE, specifically set up for the hospitality training of apprentices and managers and everything, so they had a big commercial kitchen, commercial equipment and everything. It was—Yeah. No. It was really good.”

“Yeah. I did a Certificate IV in Electronic Publishing. At RMIT in Brunswick. It was one of the biggest schools for printing in the southern hemisphere. So to work with some of the equipment there, which ran into the millions, it was really good. And the teachers there were very approachable as well. They come from the printing industry background so they were very blue collar. Very open, willing to help you. The door was open anytime for you to wander in and just have a chat.”

Steve: lines 25-28, 53-58

In a similar way, and at the same time, Ben also enrolled at MAE in both the Diploma of Further Education and RMIT’s Certificate II in IT and entered Kangan Batman TAFE to complete a Certificate IV in Multimedia before returning to MAE for the workplace training course. Two years after completing the training course, he also finished a Certificate IV in Business Administration—part of which was gained through RPL.
Table 6.4. Primary and Secondary Schooling and Subsequent Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Liked All Schooling</th>
<th>Liked Primary not Secondary</th>
<th>Disliked all Schooling</th>
<th>Tertiary straight from Secondary</th>
<th>Adults who returned to mainstream tertiary</th>
<th>Adults in ACE before mainstream tertiary</th>
<th>Adults in ACE after mainstream tertiary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biddy</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>George</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladys</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilisapeci</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jules</td>
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<td></td>
<td>❌</td>
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<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neen</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓ (During)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in Table 6.4, the liking for schooling had a lasting effect on the interviewees. Whether this was because of the ease with which the person learnt (such as Tom, Biddy and Frank), their family expectations (such as Rani’s), or their wish to be part of the friendship and learning environment (such as Ferhat), seemed immaterial.

None of the four people who disliked all aspects of schooling entered tertiary study straight from school, and of the people who liked primary but disliked secondary school, only Jane moved straight into a form of tertiary education at the State Library of Victoria—significantly not in a mainstream tertiary institute—
following employment as a librarian. Including Jane, of the ten people with negative attitudes at the end of their formal secondary education, none entered a mainstream tertiary institute.

Jane’s loathing of secondary school may in part have been because of peer problems because of her obesity. As there was no family culture of university entry, her year 12 results gained her both employment and training as a librarian, which, under the former system was more like a traineeship. Mike’s degree was undertaken under a similar system where the retail firm of Waldron Brothers in NSW, employed him and gave him study-leave, as he needed to start work full time to support himself.

Of the 13 people who had at some point returned to study in a tertiary institute, 11 had already undertaken an ACE course, and one—Tom—enrolled in ACE to complete a single unit as part of a program at RMIT which required degree students to complete two units of alternate studies. All 13 re-entered ACE after completing some tertiary study in a TAFE or University. A total of nine interviewees were enrolled as students at ACE both prior to, and returned after, completing a tertiary course.

This engagement and re-engagement in the sector does not include as volunteers, paid staff or committee members, but only as students. This gives a clear indication that people perceive their ACE centres to be places where they are welcome to participate when necessary and also that the education offered by the centres compares favourably with the other sectors. There was no indication that—unlike for the transition between primary and secondary, and perhaps tertiary—the participants felt that they had grown beyond the ACE sector in either age or
capabilities. This reinforced the familial analogies used by interviewees such as Julie, Rani and Jules.

Of the participants who had been enrolled in TAFE courses, most were extremely enthusiastic about the sector which interviewees saw as somewhere between ACE and a University, or a place to go when you wanted to do less-academic subjects. Neen thought it was easier to get into than higher education, while Ferhat thought it was harder to enter than ACE. George, Ferhat, Jane, Maeve and Steve all commented on TAFE very positively although for slightly different reasons. Although Ferhat loved his years at TAFE, he described his computer diploma course in terms of his other mainstream education as classes being like a secondary school with a teacher at the front and the students all sitting at computers with little interaction.

6.6.3 Types of Schooling

Of the eighteen interviewees, seventeen referred to the ‘types’ of schools which they attended. These were single-sex and co-educational, and state or private Catholic schools. Ferhat, the only Muslim interviewee, attended the local co-educational state schools although there are two Muslim schools in Moreland. Rani attended a range of schools in Malaysia where, although Hindu, she attended some classes in Islam which were compulsory. In India, she attended an exclusive private girls’ school.

The type of school attended seemed to make little difference to the educational outcomes, although they impacted on a range of other factors such as confidence, ability to relate to the opposite sex and social status. Biddy was enthusiastic about her education in an all-girls private Catholic college run by the Brigidine nuns, but remarked her sister had not coped as well, leaving to transfer to a state girls’ school before commencing a trade apprenticeship in hairdressing. Ilisapeti left or was
expelled from a succession of private girls’ schools by the age of 15, and did not return to schooling until an adult.

There were also totally different attitudes to being taught in the Catholic schools. Biddy’s experience was totally positive, leaving her with a lifelong love of learning, whereas the other students of Catholic schools expressed total negativity toward them.

Box 6.25: Diverging Memories of Catholic Schools

“The Brigidine nuns who run it, were very committed to social justice. … But if there were girls who couldn’t afford the fees, the nuns just looked the other way, you know.”

“It was a very academically focused school. Which suited me very well. But didn’t necessarily suit everybody. So I suppose it was privileged in one way. In it was assumed that we were all interested in ideas, and wanted to talk about ideas. And that was encouraged. On the other hand, I think it overlooked and it probably was quite blind to those who weren’t interested in those things.”

Biddy, lines: 46-49, 63-68

“I think the nuns always favoured the ones that could actually—Like the richer parents that could actually add more to the fete or, you know, donate this and donate that. And also worked in the tuck shop and stuff. And my Mum was never one of those people.

Julie, lines: 115-119

“Very negative. I had a horrible experience where one of the helpers—not a priest—kept touching my boobs and I never knew how to stop him. I was only 13 and a big girl too. I tried to tell the nuns but they said I was a nasty dirty-minded girl and they told Dad to give me a hiding, but he didn’t.”

Jules, line: 43-45

Frank and Tom both went to co-educational state high schools but progressed straight to start degrees at Monash and RMIT universities respectively.

Steve was disadvantaged in his schooling, but his choice to leave at the start of year 11 had less to do with academic ability than opportunity, as his learning skills were clearly demonstrated through the ease with which he completed any of the courses in which he later enrolled in ACE, commencing with completing a Certificate
11 in IT (Applications) in the record time of six weeks (with only twice a weekly attendance) despite suffering from—and being treated by a psychiatrist for—depression and the physical and mental after-effects of a car accident and marriage breakdown.

6.6.4 The Role of Sport

Although not a single question asked during the interviews related to sport or other interests in mainstream primary and secondary education, the subject of sport was raised by seven people as having a high level of significance. George remembered that he neglected his schoolwork because of a preference for sport, whereas Lee was extremely enthusiastic about her sporting career which began at school and at forty she was still practicing as a girls’ netball coach when she commented that sport had been good for self-discipline, confidence building and self-esteem.

For other participants, however, sport was seen as one of the most demoralising areas of their schooling years, reducing confidence and maintaining its place in memories as a very negative aspect of schooling, typified by Jules seeing herself as totally inadequate because her lack of sporting prowess was pointed out to her repeatedly until she left school at 15 to get work in a factory.

Other participants repeated similar instances, although Frank, Tom, Neen, Rani and Biddy did not mention the subject at all, so their opinions are not known.
As a small boy wearing thick glasses and struggling with the demands of a new culture and language, Ben’s memories of sport were negative and reiterated on a number of occasions during his interview.

This long-lasting negativity toward sporting activities was a constantly recurring theme. Because of its impact on health, such negativity toward physical activity had a lifelong effect, not only locking people out of recreational activities, but leaving them with low self esteem and at higher risk of obesity and related problems.

6.6.5 Other Learning

The educational experiences of a number of participants did not fit into the general picture of mainstream education even before they entered ACE.

Apart from apprenticeships such as Steve’s and vocation skills such as George’s carpentry, Julie, Jane, Mike, Jules, Gladys and May had all re-entered
Values that You Hold

education after a hiatus in their educational pathways as none progressed straight form secondary education (Table 6.3, p.221).

Julie was able to leave secondary school at 14 years of age because she enrolled in the Evelyn Ashby Business College in the central business district. No longer being under the rigid discipline of the nuns in a school where she was behind in work and having problems with literacy, by the end of eight months she was second in the class and became employed in an office.

Jane completed year 12 and found employment in a municipal library. At the time, the only training for librarians was conducted during evening classes for employed library staff at the State Library of Victoria. May left school at the end of year 11, but entered university some years later under a mature-age entry scheme, while Jules worked in the post office until 30 years of age when she entered nursing-training under the old scheme of working on the wards while studying out of hours.

Mike entered his traineeship in retail, where he was encouraged to enrol in a degree. Similarly, Gladys left school at the end of her ‘O’ levels without undertaking ‘A’ levels in England, only to enrol in a degree course in Australia.

Box 6.27: Gladys Starts Teaching

“I, while I was working as a trainee programmer, I met somebody who was teaching. And she suggested that I try teaching. So I applied to do, to be an assistant in a classroom. And I couldn’t start until I was eighteen. So on my eighteenth birthday or give or take a day, I think it was actually on my eighteenth birthday, I started off in a school. Expecting to be mixing the paints and stuff like that or whatever. And I turned up at the school, and the Headmaster, I remember him saying ‘Miss C... Miss C... Mrs. Grocott’s had a nervous breakdown. Can you look after the class?’”
Gladys; lines 578-584

At the end of this year which she described as a ‘hell’ which would never have happened in a middle class school, she started a teacher traineeship. In Australia, she
Values that You Hold

applied to do a teaching degree at Melbourne University but was rejected because of
her lack of ‘A’ levels. However, she was accepted by LaTrobe that gave her credits
from her English teacher-training. The following story—although quite long—sums
up many of the problems facing adults returning to study.

Box 6.28: Gladys Story of Being an Adult Student

“I’ll tell you a story about me at university. Because I, this was when I went to
Latrobe, and I was so excited about going to university. And I was coming from a
working-class background, I got this idea that people were absolutely brilliant if
you went to university. And it wouldn’t be—Yeah. And anyway I turned up on my
first day, and I’m so excited, I can remember this, I was going ‘Whoo’ and jumping
up and down, you know. Here I am at university. And I was in my first class which
was Adult Education. And I always take copious notes because it’s part of my
hearing—I have a hearing problem and writing the notes helps me screen out all the
noises and so on.

So I’m taking copious notes and whatever. And being earnest, I’m incredibly
earnest about what I do. And they gave us some—So we had this lesson with all the
introductory. And then, at the end of three hours, they gave us the homework.
So I took this homework away and I thought ‘Crikey. That’s a lot of homework’.
But anyway I started on the homework and it was lots of really quite analytical
articles with all different aspects. And I tried to work out, ‘Gosh. There’s a lot’,
you know. It was one of those questions where you had to ask for each one. And I
guess these were guidance questions. So to get you to interpret the material.
Anyway I worked on it day and night, day and night. And I only finished 75% of
the work. And this was my first week, and I’m thinking ‘My God. I’m going to be
behind. I’m already behind. And I’ve only been in my first week’.” …

“Anyway I’m thinking, I panicked and I thought ‘Gosh. Am I going to be able to
keep up’? So because I was an older student, I was thirty-eight when I went to uni.
I went to the lecturers afterwards, after the second class, and I just said ‘Look. I
need you to give me some pointers because, you know, I’ve worked day and night
on this, and I can’t work out how you prioritize what’s the most important text’.
Because they were all really important. They all dealt with crucial parts, I saw with
Adult Education.

And they laughed at me. They laughed at me. And I had tears. I just said ‘I can’t do
the work’. Anyway, when they saw the tears come in my eyes, they said—They
then said ‘My dear’, I remember them patronizing me. They said ‘My dear. That’s
not a week’s work, that’s the semester’s work’. And I’d done 75% of the semester’s
work in a week.”

Gladys: lines 1334-1352, 1356-1366

Although a number of participants had already experienced learning outside of
the mainstream sectors, of the 18 participants in the interviews, 17 had at some point
enrolled in a course in an ACE organisation. While this was demonstrated in Table 6.3 (p 221), people reflecting on their courses gave very positive responses in every instance—undoubtedly one of the reasons for the longevity of their connections with ACE. Many reported the transforming nature of the learning, as was discussed in relation to Mezirow and others in Chapter 3, concurring with the “comprehensive and complex description of how learners construe, validate, and reformulate the meaning of their experience” (Cranton, 1994) (p.22).

Ben, Maeve, Ferhat, Steve, Lee, George and Ilisapeci all made specific references to a life-changing property in relation to their ACE courses. For some (Ben, Maeve, Lee, Ilisapeci) it was the opportunity to advance to TAFE or Higher Education, for others (Steve, Ben, George) it offered a chance to restore confidence and gain support during poor health. Mike was also able to plan for an alternate working life after major life-threatening surgery. For Ferhat and Neen, it meant unexpectedly being able to gain an additional qualification to make them more employable without incurring the high costs of mainstreams sectors, while receiving the one-to-one support they needed to achieve their goals. For Julie, whose literacy impacted on her school-life so that she left at 14, it meant overcoming years of low self esteem because she could confidently fill out any forms and describe her level of education as year 11 and not year 9.

In educational terms, all of the interviewees were very positive about their ACE experience but this was predictable given that they were all still engaged in some capacity within the sector. Although this meant there were few negative comments, those covered different issues. For Rani, having to deliver accredited courses whether the students wanted them or not was an issue. Others felt that education in ACE was seriously disadvantaged by the lack of funding for OH&S and for upgrading IT.
Other complaints were about the lower level of salaries paid to teaching staff compared to those of TAFE teachers, and Neen was one of the strongest critics of the lack of promotion and advertising done in the sector.

External perceptions of ACE education did not always recognise that, as Registered Training Organisations, many ACE providers could deliver TAFE-level courses which were either nationally or state-accredited. Ben, Ilispeci and Steve’s participation in ACE through the Dip FE gained them entry into the tertiary courses of their choice.

Frank, however, once again provided an objective appraisal of the education which takes place in ACE when asked about the people who go ACE as distinct from other sectors.

Box 6.29: Frank’s View as an Observer

“'Well, they obviously hear from mates or something. They must hear from somebody. You know, people with those sort of stories, you know, they're getting together. So and they know they're not going to be judged if they come out with them. So they feel comfortable, you know, with other people who've had the same sort of experiences. [In mainstream education] you’ve just got to do your assignments and pass your exams. And go down the pub afterwards, I suppose. If you’re into that sort of thing. But. No. No. Tutors and lecturers aren’t, aren’t interested in that sort of stuff’.”

Frank: lines 266-280

Despite having been engaged in the sector for 12 years in a variety of capacities, Frank’s description of the sector gave a clear indication of external perceptions of the education which takes place in ACE when he dismissed the students as ‘other’, meaning those with a high level of need for support which would not be given in mainstream education.
As interviewees like May explained, this perception was also evident in the funding bodies such as ACFE, as was indicated by the 2005 ruling that ACE centres would only be funded to deliver lower level courses as from 2006. As stated in Memo 2005/26, funding would go to ‘entry level courses’ which was usually AQF 11, severely limiting the access of disadvantaged adults who are unable to attend a TAFE, to any qualification which may lead to real employment (ACFEB, 2005a).

May became quite annoyed as she explained her concern about the rhetoric being spouted by funding bodies that ACE was fantastic and wonderful and how it was the heart and sort of soul of education in our communities, whereas at the same time, the funding was being drastically reduced (ACEVic, 2006). This statement applied to the 3% cut over three years which was to be introduced starting 2006 which will impact negatively on most providers’ abilities to deliver quality education. May also feared it would cause a lessening in the personal support stakeholders expected from the ACE sector, which helped to define it as a different, more adaptable form of education.

6.6.7 Learning Groups

Some participants may have chosen not to disclose events or problems in their lives. However, when the number of disadvantages was aligned with the educational achievements, the following patterns emerged, creating four groups from the 18 interviewees.

**Group 1—the School-Lovers**

The first group reported no childhood traumas or major problems as adults so had positive memories of schooling. This group was comprised of Biddy, Frank, and Tom, all of whom had very positive attitudes to learning and schooling, and had progressed in the following years to complete successful degrees despite a wide
variety in their ages (Biddy and Frank 50+ and Tom was 22 at the time of the interview). Biddy attended an all-girls catholic school while both Frank and Tom attended their local state co-educational schools. One other commonality was the longevity of their associations with ACE as Biddy had started as a group member for creative writing and worked in the sector for many years. Frank had a small second job in the sector while Tom had been introduced as a child ‘helping out’ at social occasions and later doing occasional IT support before enrolling to do an accredited unit at Certificate IV level. All had parents whose marriages were intact, and all had at least one sibling. They all mentioned employment in relation to their ACE connections; Biddy and Frank to earn a living, and Tom undertaking a unit to enhance his resume.

It was difficult to find any other common traits in this group as Frank had never enrolled in an ACE course although the other two had at some stage. Tom grew up in Moreland and was still living there at the time of the interview. Although Frank lived in Moreland at the time of his interview, he grew up on the other side of the city nearer to the urban fringe, while Biddy shifted constantly, lives south of the city, and has only ever worked in Moreland.

**Group 2—the School-Likers**

This group had no more than one or two disadvantages or special advantages. It was comprised of Jane, Lee, Mike and Neen. Only Jane reported her problem with obesity as having any negativity in her childhood, although Mike’s parents separated and his carer-grandmother had died when he was young. Three members of this group commented on happily married parents and siblings. During adult years, Mike and Jane reported health issues and Jane faced unemployment as well. Lee was divorced and the sole parent of two daughters, while Neen mentioned unemployment
as being a family issue for a period. Jane had never married, Lee was divorced and
Neen and Mike happily married for many years. Educationally, all attended local
state schools. Jane entered her library diploma course as did Mike his traineeship and
degree shortly after gaining employment at 18 years, although Jane was the only
person in groups one and two who was negative in her attitude to secondary
schooling. Lee completed year 12 but only returned to study at ACE after her divorce
and then enrolled in a teaching degree. Neen completed year 11 and entered ACE to
complete both a Cert II in IT and a Cert IV in Assessment and Workplace Training.
All mentioned employment or unemployment in relation to their ACE connections.

**Group 3—the School-Learners**

This group was comprised of Ferhat, Gladys, May, Rani, Jules and Ben who all
had 3-4 developmental disadvantages but under four traumatic events in their mature
years, indicating they had to some degree overcome the issues of childhood. This
disparate group progressed to (Ferhat, Rani)—or had a pattern of later re-entering—
education (Gladys, May, Jules, Ben)—to achieved tertiary qualifications, but all had
a pattern of embracing non-formal learning which meant that learning had never
posed a problem. Three were born overseas and one interstate, with Jules and Ferhat
(to migrant parents) born in Melbourne. Two were from families which had split, and
all but Ben (who saw having no brothers or sisters as having disadvantaged his
childhood) mentioned siblings. Jules’s mother (and a brother) had died creating a
dynamic for her which possibly differed from a family breakdown due to divorce.
Three of this group mentioned drugs and two mentioned alcohol.

**Group 4—the School Loathers**

Steve and Maeve had a lower number of disadvantages as children, but higher
as adults. While his parents divorced and had court-related custody issues, Maeve’s
stayed together—which may have also been a generational decision, and both had multiple siblings. Steve’s own marriage broke down after a car accident left him unemployed and he had years of unresolved custody issues for his own child. Maeve was also divorced and a sole supporting parent with three children. She had a considerable number of health and social issues, and repeatedly referred to the problems facing her own children which included marriage breakdown, drugs and alcohol, health issues and unemployment. Both were born in Melbourne to Australian parents, and entered ACE as unemployed. Neither completed secondary school and both had attended co-educational state schools. Both gained places in TAFE courses after applying through ACE, but Steve was unable to gain employment in the field on completion, and Maeve was diagnosed with breast cancer and withdrew. Both had taken anti-depressant and/or pain-killing medication, reported major health problems and relied on Centrelink for financial support. Neither fully owned their own homes, Steve having lost his after the accident and divorce and at the time of the interview was living with relatives. Maeve owned half a house with her brother.

The rest of this fourth group had high numbers of disadvantages in both the developmental and adult stages of their lives. All three, George, Ilisapeci, and Julie had failed to complete secondary school. All had negative responses to education despite having attended three totally different schooling types: George at co-educational state schools in New Zealand, Ilisapeci at private girls’ schools in Sydney and Julie at an all-girls Catholic school. Two had divorced parents and were born in other countries (New Zealand and Fiji) while Julie’s parents stayed together, emigrated from Britain and she was born in a migrant hostel. All mentioned some form of either prescription or illegal drugs and all mentioned some kind of bullying
or violence in the home; Julie by an older brother, George by a step-father and Ilisapeci by her mother.

Given that the interviewees may have been very selective in their dialogue, and were certainly less inclined to mention advantages and happy memories, and that the researcher not only developed the questions but also created the categories, there was a strong trend toward reinforcing predictable social and familial perceptions. The first of these was that multiple disadvantages during the developmental years of the interviewees in the School-leavers group had negative effects on their attitude to schooling. This was verified by the fact that those people who reported no disadvantages in childhood in the School-lovers group—and also predictably had the most positive responses—all progressed straight from secondary into tertiary education and completed degrees.

What was less predictable was that the degree of negativity or advantage which was experienced during the developmental years tended to be replicated in mature ages, creating a picture of disadvantage which frequently continued into a severely disrupted or fragmented adulthood. In some cases, this disadvantage appeared to cross not only two but into a third generation (Maeve, Julie, George and Steve) where the children were also mentioned in terms of ill health, unemployment, drugs or alcohol and custody with access problems.

Interestingly, the type of schooling experienced by both of the extremes—School lovers and loathers—appeared to have little relevance for the outcomes. Biddy, Ilisapeci and Julie attended all-girls’ schools. Both Biddy and Julie attended Catholic schools and referred—one positively and one negatively—to the nuns. Tom and Frank as well as George, Steve and Maeve all attended co-educational state schools with contrasting outcomes. A predictor of educational success or lack of
success did not seem to lie with only having distracting disadvantages such as poverty, low literacy or family disintegration, but a positive attitude engendered by a settled home life, supportive family members and reasonable health.

This concentration on the disadvantages does seem to perpetuate the deficit model against which Waterhouse and Virgona (2005) argued in relation to literacy, and the importance of redefining success and integrating the concept of resilience into the narrative arcs of life stories. However, because these issues were raised repeatedly by the majority of the interviewees when asked about the formative influences in their lives, they have been used as the defining characteristics of the majority of this particular group of ACE participants as part of the enquiry as to why people engage in ACE.

In contrast to the other two Dimensions discussed in Chapter 7—People and Community—the many issues identified as both Business and Education created a picture of the sector under dual forms of pressure.

6.7 Concluding Comment

One of the first questions which acted as an instigator of this research was related to change, and asked if ACE was changing, and if any change related to its becoming more like a TAFE—as defined by its emphasis on vocational training, enrolment numbers and business management. The comparison of the development of MAE indicted that very large changes had occurred, mainly in relation to those areas which were quantifiable and therefore easy to evaluate. Working back through the organisational statistics and the comments by respondents and interviewees which concurred in creating similar dimensions, the measurable data for the research period can be compared in each of the four dimensions, that is, Education, People, Business and Community.
Although initially it appeared that ACE centres like MAE were under a simple form of pressure to change, identifying the themes and categorising them into the four dimensions demonstrated that there were two forms of strain on ACE. The first was the external pressure to introduce those changes. The second was the internal pressure placed on the centres to remain true to core values and effective systems, and to reject demands and constraints of funding bodies keen to implement government policies.

This chapter commenced with a description of the interviewees who took part in the interview discussions demonstrating that they were a diverse group, but many shared surprisingly similar views and attributes. The chapter described the original 52 ideas which emerged from the interviews, most in the form of recurring themes and opinions, and how these were reduced before bringing categorised into four dimensions: People, Community, Education and Business.

It was initially suggested in the survey responses that although some people joined the ACE program to complete a course and pathway elsewhere, many people moved between roles and stayed attached to organisations for longer periods. While Business and Education were pressuring ACE—as exemplified by MAE—to change, the people and the local community were resisting those changes. Ironically, by being supportive of the sector, that unwillingness to change was causing strain, leaving the ACE centre with the dual pressures of having to change to remain viable and operational through audit compliance, quality assurance and maintenance of funding which dictated their sustainability, while attempting to remain true to core values to satisfy local residents.
7. MAE STAKEHOLDERS’ PERCEPTIONS of the SELF and COMMUNITY

“We just feel be yourself, and it’s really good just to be able to express yourself...without any limitations there.” [Discussing a ceremonial circumcision] Ferhat

This chapter analyses the two dimensions identified as those where the pressure placed on MAE was from internal sources, beginning with the people who often resented changes to ACE. When read through the recounted, lived-experiences of the people involved, this resistance to change was understandable. This was followed by the dimension called ‘Community’, where the interviewees discussed their sense of connectedness to their localities, their feelings of responsibility and shared awareness of MAE as a group which, in a small way for some people, replicated the sense of family which had been diminished due to familial breakdown.

Every one of the interviewees had multiple motives for entering and remaining in ACE: personal, educational and community-connectedness. The few exceptions to having all four included Frank, who had never engaged in any form of training in ACE. Other participants who had not fulfilled all categories were Neen, Tom and Biddy. Neen and Tom both described happy childhoods and neither had experienced marriage breakdown or major health issues for themselves or immediate family. Neen’s memories of schooling only contained the average concerns of childhood such as being justifiably chastised by a teacher—although his method was inappropriately designed to humiliate—while Tom mentioned having a broken arm which he had written about as a ten year old in Caring Concerns. (Atkinson & McFarlane, 1992, p. 64). Although Biddy’s childhood did not seem to be impoverished, she did comment that her parents were ‘very unhappy’, although she gave no further details.
Tom—the most positive—was the youngest of the interviewees, and although it was possible to assume his buoyancy was the optimism of youth, his statements provide stark contrasts to those of Ilisapeci who was only two years older.

### 7.1 Socio-Personal

The primary dimension which engendered the most emotional responses from the interview participants related to the personal aspect of people’s lives either to themselves or to immediate and extended family. These have been collected into three categories during analysis. The first category encompassed parents, siblings, extended family and close friends often including references to a deficiency of some kind, whether poverty or lack of encouragement and values. The second referred to influences which are inclusive of attitudes to language and literacy, the impact of culture/religion, class and migration. The last category included descriptions of how personal and family members’ health impacted on the interviewee’s life and drugs of any kind. While it was apparent that these categories were often interwoven, during analysis, these categories remained the most effective sub-divisions for discussion.

There was an extremely wide range of often intimate material which interviewees raised when discussing personal matters, and considering that the interviews were taped and therefore included the absent third-person as listener, other more intimate matters may have been left out. Steve, for instance, made some small mentions of his personal life for the purpose of the interview and was happy for any known detail of his life to be recorded, but did not feel strong enough to ‘work back through it’ all.

#### 7.1.1 Parents

While the permanent effect of parents on the life of every interviewee was predictable, it was not expected that such powerful responses were often evident with
anger over slights and neglects, and even petulance over sibling issues. Of the 18 participants, only seven recounted positive stories or instances of positive parental memories, although those who did showed real and visible emotions ranging from grief over their loss (Jane and Gladys) to admiration for the values which had provided guidance for their own attitudes and behaviour (May and Rani). Four participants told both negative stories of one parent and positive of another, while nine told negative stories of a parent.

One of the recurrent comments from a number of the interviewees related to the core values and beliefs they had maintained throughout life, which had been developed within the family circle. George felt this very strongly about his grandmother’s influence. However the effect of family influence is best exemplified in the quote below by May who was raised by her father as a sole supporting parent in the sixties.

Box 7.1: The Impact of Extended Family Members

“My grandfather, his politics, his views on religion, were things that I remember. I don’t necessarily agree with them, but they clearly helped me form my own views”. Mike, lines:

“Like my grandmother had a big influence on me because I was very fond of my grandmother. She talked to me a lot and she was a great reader”. Maeve, lines:

“I think my sort of core values, that still kind of get stronger as I get older, were really formulated I think as a result of my Dad. Being working class and being a really dead-set honest kind of bloke. For him it was like you didn’t lie, you didn’t cheat, you always did the right thing, and I think that they sit sort of with me pretty well still today. Because of the community, it was fairly sort of low socio-economic sort of community, I think I still have strong - I’m still in that sort of mind-set I think. I don’t think it would matter how much money I had, I think that’s just basically how I am. Very sort of small town.” May, lines 26-33.
Perhaps because harmful memories were much stronger and more difficult to either transfer or negate, the tales concerning parental violence or neglect were not only discussed more forcefully, but also demonstrated a heightened sense of the need for catharsis, as illustrated in the following quotations.

Box 7.2: Parental Violence

“It couldn’t win. I couldn’t win. And so it was a living nightmare. Um. And my Mum was very, very abusive, physically abusive. Um. From a very young age. I remember when we lived at East Esplanade, I would have been not even four years old. And my Mum threw a frying pan at my head that narrowly missed…”

“Yeah. So I remember coming to school one day covered in scratches. Finger marks around my throat. The whole lot. And Joanna said, ‘What happened to you?’ And I said my usual. ‘Walked into a door’. And she said, ‘Bullshit’.”

Ilisapeci, lines 365-8, 500-502

“In the household, I suppose the folks did get a bit strict. So they’d sort of hit me. Hit me quite hard…Um. Actually at one stage I remember the old man hit me and I stood up against him and he goes, ‘What just because you’re body building you stand up to me now?’”

Ferhat, lines: 308-9, 340-2

“And, um, Mum always said that Dad had a drinking problem, and was violent and would, you know, come at her with a machete, sugar-cane machete. And, um, go on benders for days and days and leave her just with me, a very small baby.”

Ilisapeci: lines: 27-29

“Gran was the brick that held us together, but she and Dad were always going hammer and tongs”.

Jules, lines: 30-32

These quotations demonstrate the variety of after-effects people maintained from negative parental attitudes or behaviours, but are also supported by other interviewees’ comments on the long-term memories of—in all cases the father—drinking to excess, as by Maeve, Julie, Jules and Gladys.

Although no question referred to violence, it was a recurring theme for six of the eighteen participants. For four it was from direct, personal physical threats: Ferhat (father), Ilisapeci (mother), George (step-father), and Julie (brother). Less
directly, Maeve and Jules also referred to family tensions and fights between their parents and grandmothers, with whom each family lived, creating a picture of disharmony which was retained until long beyond middle-age.

The divorce or death of a parent and some subsequent custody issues were detailed by May, Mike, Jules, Steve, Ilisapeci, Ferhat, and George. Sometimes these stories were detailed and sometimes just mentioned within general comments on family, but did not result from specific questions.

Box 7.3: Sole Parent Issues.

“My father was twenty-one, my mother was sixteen. And after my birth, three or four months later, they were soon divorced. My father got custody, very unusual at the time.”
Mike: lines 10-12

“And I was crying. And I was screaming. And, ah, Dad was crying, and Mum had boarded the aircraft. And, um, Dad had to pick me up and go up the steps of the aircraft and physically give me to Mum. Because I was so upset. Just absolutely distraught. And Dad was extremely upset. And, ah, that was 19-, it was 1980, 1981. Ah, I never saw my father again until June of this year, 2005”.
Ilisapeci, lines: 40-42

“Mum had what we used to call nerves and died when I was 15. Dad used to drown his sorrows on the way home every night. Unless he’d been drinking he was a hard worker and sang a lot…. Mum died of cancer. She had a lump and told the doctor twice but he told her it was just her nerves so she eventually went to another doctor but it was too late by then. Gran said you could feel it like a golf ball near her hip. You would sue the doctor these days. I always felt different to other kids at school because Mum was sick and Gran came to pick us up from school.”
Jules, lines: 15-17, 26-29

While some interviewees such as Tom and Frank made general passing references to parents that were neither positive nor negative, others told warm stories of paternal support and modelling.
Box 7.4: Rani’s Positive Memory of her Father

“My father’s love kept me going. He gave me so much. When I was at Madras University I won the oratory competition for three years in a row. My father held me and cried like a baby for the child who was never going to speak. It was my father’s support and encouragement that always kept me going. He educated all of his daughters.”
Rani: lines 50-54

There were a number of positive mentions of the combined ‘parents’ such as those by Jane, Lee and Neen. For the majority of participants, it seemed that unless they were left with some unresolved conflict or residual anger against either parent, most, such as Frank’s, “The old man was a bit nervous. Yeah.” were accepting of frailties and appreciative of the efforts gone toward raising them.

Box 7.5: Positive Memories of Parenting

“Yes. I had a happy childhood…They were like the old fashioned sort of family. In that they stayed together, you know, and the family was raised.”
Jane, lines: 40-45

“Regular schools, nothing outstanding, regular student. I had a great sporting career. Come from a fabulous middle class family.”
Lee, lines: 12-14

“The openness of my family, being able to talk about anything. Lots of laughter. Communication was good at home. Family life was pretty good at home. I think that’s a help with a family unit. Not like it is nowadays where they’re breaking up all the time and you’re losing mothers or fathers and everything else. Having someone to go to. Helping each other out.’
Neen, lines: 1-35

Mothers, however, received few specific mentions. While Mike, Rani and Ilisapeci were respectively dismissive, negative and angry, only Julie and Biddy made positive comments.
“And we had a few holidays, you know, and stuff like that. Just - but Dad was never one for like drives on Sunday. That kind of thing. But then I had Mum…. So Mum and I were very close.”
Julie, lines: 163-74

“But also my mother I think was a significant influence, again on later reflection. She left school in Grade 8. Which was normal at that time. And got her Merit, was very proud of that. …She did the Dale Carnegie course in the 50’s. And I think it was her version of mature age women going back to study. Because it was quite a serious course, where she went every week. They had to do speeches, they had to do group activity. She was the only woman in fifty men. You know, I mean a gutsy thing to do.”
Biddy, lines: 100-12, 124-128

Although a number of participants didn’t mention parents at all, some (Ben, Frank, Jane, Neen, Lee and Maeve) made general references in relation to other factors or issues, such as Ben’s reference to his father being able to hold him in one hand when he was born a premature baby, evoking a very tender scene. Some participants gave mixed messages which demonstrated depths of emotions ranging from love to resentment as was specifically noticeable in Rani and Julie’s dialogue.

Rani’s interview referred to her mother on multiple occasions including that she had made her feel having her was a mistake. Julie said that although really close to her mother until the age of 17, there was lingering resentment which she herself recognised as jealousy over her mother’s adoption of a two year-old niece.

While such a range of experiences and emotions may be typical of most groups of 18 people for this group, seven were from single parent families due to death or divorce, two made positive mentions of mothers and seven of fathers.
“Come from a rather pretty ordinary sort of background. We had nothing. Basically my father had a few problems with grog and backing horses. So he worked hard, he always went to work, so Friday night to Sunday he had his problem. My mother was constantly poor. We had to live with my grandmother who they didn’t like each other and I was the go-between with them and sometimes through the fighting and carrying on. We were sort of stuck in a room most of the time, just her and I. Then we’d roam the streets of Brunswick going to visit aunts because in those days everyone lived close by and aunts and uncles that lived all round. Friday nights we’d go up the pictures or visit aunts. I can’t say it was a marvellous life, it was a bit horrendous at times but at least it wasn’t boring, I’ve got to say that”.

Maeve, lines: 12-22

“They were Communists, actually. So, this was in the 50’s, when I was growing up. They had to tell me not to tell anybody that they were Communists. Because well, everyone hated the ‘Commos’ in those days. Probably still do. So I got a bit of a paranoid streak going at the time, I think. Never really left me. …”

“Well, we always had books around. They always gave me Russian books to read… From International Publishing House or something.”

Frank, lines: 29-32, 102-114

While the breaking down of parental marriage was mentioned by six participants, a further eight discussed the breakdown of their own relationships. While this increase and proportion may be representative of general social trends, participants told emotional stories of custody battles and lingering bitterness demonstrating the urge toward catharsis, or needing to make sense of the emotional traumas in their lives whether the marriage breakdown was their parents or their own.

7.1.2 Siblings

Most participants made specific mentions of the number of siblings, gender and their place in the family, indicating that those factors had considerable influence not only on their formative years, but how they continue to view their own successes, failures and other qualities such as self esteem.
### Table 7.1: Siblings: Number and Placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Siblings</th>
<th>Place in family</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Only</td>
<td>Regretted no siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biddy</td>
<td>3 brothers</td>
<td>First girl after 2 boys</td>
<td>First girl child ‘special’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferhat</td>
<td>2 brothers</td>
<td>Oldest</td>
<td>Responsibilities and Target for violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>1 sister</td>
<td>Oldest</td>
<td>No impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>1 half sister</td>
<td>Oldest</td>
<td>Sister very supportive in difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladys</td>
<td>6 brothers</td>
<td>Second, Only girl</td>
<td>Unfair burden of responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilisapeci</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Only</td>
<td>Regretted no siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>3 sisters</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Good relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jules</td>
<td>2 brothers</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Older brother bullied (younger died)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>1 brother, 1 adopted baby girl cousin</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Older brother bullied Jealous of adopted baby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>1 brother</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>No comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maeve</td>
<td>1 brother, 1 sister</td>
<td>Youngest</td>
<td>Baby-spoilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>1 brother, 1 sister</td>
<td>Youngest</td>
<td>Sister much older-excellent academically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>1 half-sister, 1 step-sister, 3 ‘cousins’ of similar age who were his grandfather’s step-children</td>
<td>Only/Oldest</td>
<td>Very complex story—see below Extended Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neen</td>
<td>1 brother, 1 sister</td>
<td>Youngest</td>
<td>‘spoilt baby’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rani</td>
<td>9 brothers &amp; sisters (unspecified)</td>
<td>Oldest</td>
<td>Oldest-‘golden girl’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Steve</td>
<td>2 sisters, 1 half brother</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>First male child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Tom</td>
<td>1 half brother, 2 half-sisters</td>
<td>Youngest</td>
<td>‘spoilt baby’, ‘lucky’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Half brothers*

The two interviewees (Ben and Ilisapeci) who mentioned being only children did so with real regret, Ben especially expressing a feeling of loss or deprivation rather than benefit.

Box 7.8: Only Children

“I suppose, you know, growing up - being an only child and not having many sort of other young children around me. I’ve got - I mean there are cousins I grew up round, younger cousins, but they were all younger than myself. So I never had any sort of like sibling type relationships with anyone and that sort of had a bit of an impact…

Oh, extremely introverted, extremely shy child growing up. Was never really involved with, you know, any other like - the clique-y groups you find in schools. Very much kept to myself. You know, I do remember … my Grade 3 teacher, I remember once going to my mother and asking ‘if everything was all right with Ben because he just sort of doesn’t get involved in anything’ - like during lunch times and that. So I thought that really sort of sums up my growing up.”

Ben, lines 39-42, 48-53
And I was a stranger to my brothers and sisters. Because of the huge age difference. So I would only come during the school holidays. And my father would tell me ‘Come home’ every school holiday. So that I would be with them. So I was just a special person coming in and going out. And they didn’t really connect with me. That’s a sadness. And they still stand in awe of me. You know, because I’m the first.”

Rani, lines: 84-89

Despite having nine younger brothers and sisters, Rani’s story was both different and similar to Ben’s as she was an only child for her first eight years and she was educated in India from 14 years old so felt she was had so little interaction with her nine baby siblings that she was always treated as an ‘only child’.

For Ben, being an only child without a sibling for interaction compounded his other school-yard disadvantages of being short, a second-language speaker with a sight impairment wearing very thick glasses throughout his primary years. As was noted by Veronica Volkoff in her study in her research on disadvantage, this multiplicity of disadvantages had a compounding effect which may have impacted negatively on Ben even in his later life when he developed a psychiatric illness requiring years of treatment (Volkoff, 2004). In the same way, Ilisapeci specifically and regretfully mentioned being the only child of both parents as far as she knew, but was recently thrilled to discover 31 first cousins exist and still live in Suva.

For some of the participants, siblings had an enormous, ongoing influence on their lives. George felt he would not have survived the years since his industrial accident without the support of his sister. Julie felt her mother had been lost to her and articulated her resentment of her adopted baby cousin in a manner which left no doubt the subject still rankled. Participants usually concurred with stereotypes and expected older brothers to bully them and older sisters to care for them. However this stereotype was broken by Ferhat whose support for his younger brothers was briefly
mentioned in his interview but had been discussed and verified during MAE classes in relation to his educational support and caring for his younger brother for many years.

Gladys however, was the most affected not only by being one of seven children, but by her position as the only daughter in a family with six sons. She reiterated this disadvantage on a number of occasions, especially in relation to eventually leaving home because her parents wanted her to take all responsibility for her six brothers, which she felt was being treated as a servant. Being one of seven created problems with nowhere to study, difficult sleeping arrangements and continuing poverty. However, she stated repeatedly that she was very fond of her brothers. She told a number of stories of how their behaviour at school and in the community negatively impacted on her own education, and instances of sibling relationships at work—the bullying older brother and mothering older girl being family stereotypes.

Box 7.9: Gladys’s Brothers

“We all walked down to school. And I can remember our Johnny, that’s my oldest brother. He, he’s eighteen months older than me and he had–Our Mum used to take us to school. But after a while Johnny was supposed to take me to school. I started school at four and a half. And he used to hold my hand around the corner, and leave me. …I used to make my own way. Well, probably be five by then. And coming home, he’d catch me up and walk home with me just around the corner…. I was quite the opposite. Yeah. … Cared for them very much. Used to hold their hand, you know, and watch them go in, and make sure they were all right.”

Gladys, lines: 247-272

Biddy felt her celebrated birth as the first girl in the family and being named for her paternal grandmother had given her strength and confidence throughout her life.

One of the most positive factors regarding siblings was expressed by two of the interviewees: Tom and Neen, who felt their position as the youngest of a group of siblings had been a great advantage. They both felt that being the spoilt baby of a
family had given them great confidence which had carried over into their adult lives.

Tom summed this up by recounting a number of stories involving his three older
siblings caring for him and including him in social outings with friends and partners.

Box 7.10: Tom’s Siblings

“My family, I was always the baby. I was considered the young one so I was
always very spoilt as a kid and always got lots of good birthday and Christmas
presents. Which I considered was very lucky of me. My grandmother always used
to say that I was a very lucky child, being the youngest one. And all my brothers
and sisters always loved me lots. Which probably helped me in later life. …
My sister, being a lot older than me, and me being a young little kid, still in primary
school, used to always invite me around to her house to go and stay. And I always
used to look forward to those times when I’d go over there and, you know, spend
the night watching videos and stuff like that. …
Yeah. I had many a time with my brother going out to things like the soccer when
Australia played Iran. A lot of, a lot of events with my brother and sisters.”
Tom, lines: 221-226, 23-236, 252-253

The positive effect of this early support and confidence-building by either
parents and/or siblings seemed to have been missing from many of the participants’
lives. Despite having a loving father and two siblings, May reported having had no
educational support or expectations of achievement due to both low levels of family
education, and because as a girl there was no encouragement to take on an
apprenticeship as there was for boys. The same was true in slightly different ways for
George, Gladys and Jules.

7.1.3 Extended Family and Friends

The importance of extended family and friends was emphasized repeatedly
among participants. Uncles and aunts, step parents and grandparents, cousins and
family friends were often the subjects of stories. Many cousins were seen as
substitute siblings—particularly for Ben, Mike and Ilisapei—while uncles and aunts
formed an extended circle of inner connections during family crises for George, Mike and Ilisapeci or to act in supporting roles to parents (Jane, Mike, Julie and Maeve).

Grandparents received as many mentions as parents during the interviews. Although participants Maeve (paternal), Tom (maternal), Del (paternal), Ilisapeci (maternal), and Jane (paternal) all referred to grandmothers, it appeared that their families were aligned to that grandparent on only one side of the family—and not both sets of grandparents. However, a surprising four of the eighteen participants had been actively raised by their grandparents. In addition, Rani had been cared for by her grandmother during the first five years of her life, but did not specify whether this was in the family home such as with Jules after the death of her mother, or in the grandparents’ own home like Mike.

Box 7.11: Raised by Grandparents

“And my father and my grandmother, his - my paternal grandmother - became my guardians. So for the first ten or so, twelve years of my life, I was brought up in my grandfather’s house. Except for a brief period of time when my father remarried and I moved into his home, with my stepsister, for about eight months. Then I returned to my grandparents. … So I grew up I think in a very, what I considered a very rich and loving family. And I was not aware that my grandmother was not my mother until I was about five or six.”
Mike: lines 16-20, 39-41

“First couple of years I was actually raised by my grandparents my folks were working quite a bit then. … They were very cultural. They had no—I mean, they couldn’t speak English quite well, sort of thing.”
Ferhat, lines: 14-15, 22-23

“My mother was a dressmaker and she had to go to work then, and I spent a lot of my time with my grandmother. … Probably one to five or something like that. I don’t know. I can’t remember really”
George, lines: 777-792

Each of these produced a different reaction while explaining this difference in upbringing from what they perceived as the family norm. Whereas Jules showed
gratitude for her grandmother “being the brick that held us together” and George felt his had formed his abiding core values, Mike seemed concerned that his childhood should not be seen as ideal. Ferhat both accepted what was a cultural norm and felt that the subsequent lack of bonding with his parents had in some way led to his father’s violent treatment and their later spasmodic estrangements.

Friendships were mentioned to a lesser degree, predominantly during schooling years when peer support and approval seemed to be a measure of self-esteem and confidence. Julie, Ben, Mike, Ferhat, Tom, Gladys, Neen and Ilisapeci all made reference to the importance of their friendship support groups. For some, these were made more important by an absence of siblings or other family support.

These relationships should not, however, all be taken as positive examples of connected extended families with supportive friends. Although these are described in many interviews, the examples of violence and the long-term effects of poverty and family breakdown were also recurring motifs.

Frank’s story of another student illustrated not only the negative effects of having an untrustworthy friend integrate into a position of family trust, but also the long-reaching effects of such incidents, as the boy in question presented at MAE as a nineteen year old unable to read or to write his own name due to multiple disadvantages of family alcoholism and breakdown. He had lived with a violent step parent transferring between schools in different states and had a CALD background—disadvantages all exacerbated by the following incidence of sexual violence.
Box 7.12: Frank’s Retelling of a Story

“For there was this - there was another young bloke who, when he was a little boy, his mother, his mother left the old man and they went to South Australia. And she met some other bloke. So he had two younger, you know, half brothers and sisters or something. And one of his memories from over there was, sitting on the lawn with these two little kids, picking glass out of them. Because the old – his stepfather had thrown them all through a window… So he pinched some money from his mother or something and found a public phone and rang up the old man back here. And the old man came over and got him back. So that’s how he escaped from that… But when he got back here, apparently the old man bought him a big dog. Because, I suppose, he just wanted to give him a bit of confidence or something. And they used to go out hunting with one of the old man’s mates. And one particular time, the old man was crook or something. So his mate took him and, you know, this young bloke and the dog. Took him back to his place and, you know, they were going to go hunting from there. He got him inside and he said ‘Now pull down your pants and bend over’. But like this - The young bloke said the dog got in-between the two of them and wouldn’t let this bloke near him.”

Frank, lines: 209-243

7.1.4 Poverty and Deficiency

Although only two of the interviewees actually referred directly to financial poverty in childhood, an additional five referred to conditions which indicated that they grew up in financially disadvantaged families. The most evocative of these stories (following) was told by Gladys about her childhood in Birmingham.
Box 7.13: Gladys and Julie on Poverty

“...I will tell you about my first day at school. Because it’s funny I can remember that. I had to go to school in my nightie. It was a nice nightie, but I knew it was a nightie. And it was because that was the best thing I had to wear. And I can remember that. I was very embarrassed about it. But I think it shows how hard it was for my parents.” [Gladys had tears in her eyes when recounting this story] “...Yes. So—And I had to go off in a uniform. Oh, but I remember that. Oh God. I remember that. It’s the same as the nightie business. But it’s, only it’s years later. We had to wear a uniform and my Mum couldn’t afford to buy me a new one. So she bought me a second hand one. And everyone goes to school with a blazer that’s far too big for them. But you know you’re going to grow into it. And that’s fine, except that mine’s already looking a bit threadbare when I turned up in it. And it was still huge. And I still—I wore that blazer and it just got more and more threadbare as the years went on. So—But it was the same. I was terribly embarrassed about that.”

Gladys: lines 214-237, 361-368

“We never had hot water running, we had to still boil the kettle. ... And we never had a shower until we moved into the place where Mum is now, in Albert Street. And I was seventeen when we moved in there. So all that time through, we had to wash with bowls.” “But people when I’ve said, they couldn’t believe that we didn’t have indoor plumbing. In Brunswick. ...Yes. But the toilet was always down the back still, you know. But it was – it flushed, it wasn’t a can or anything.” “And even when I’ve said about different things to people my age, I mean, they all had their own rooms, they all did. So when I think back now on what other people have actually said about that period of time. I suppose in a way we were sort of pretty poor.”

Julie, lines: 246-255, 258-274, 384-387

Gladys also felt that finishing school early and leaving home at seventeen was related to her family poverty as she thought her presence created an additional financial burden making her parents relieved when she left. Julie related eight instances demonstrating that poverty was a major factor in the family. When considering whether to stay at school or leave at fourteen, the decision was made around the comparative costs of buying new uniforms and schooling fees for a course in a commercial college.
Probably the strongest expressions of non-financial poverty were about other forms of deficiency in people’s lives. Ilisapeci lacked a loving family and along with Ferhat, lacked safety in the face of family violence. Julie lacked literacy skills while Ben and Rani lacked skills in the language of the dominant culture. A number of participants lacked good health in childhood and/or adulthood, while others expressed regret for a lack of a parent, siblings, extended family or just support in their educational endeavours.

While the term poverty tended to signal financial lack, it also referred to a paucity or reduction of many other support mechanisms often supplied by extended families. For many of the interviewees, May, Jules, George, Julie (educational), Julie, Gladys, Maeve, Jules (finances), Ferhat, George, Ilisapeci (safety) and Ben, Ferhat, George, Ilisapeci, Jane, Jules, Mike, Julie, Maeve, Mike, Rani and Steve (health) these supports were not available, leaving them with a sense of a truncated childhood or reduced opportunities.

7.1.5 Culture

The majority of the interviews expressed opinions or ideas which related to a form of either a personal or family culture based on their ethnic heritage and language or a set of interests and commonalities—such as self-defined social class—which they felt classified them in some way.

Four of the interviewees acknowledged that their formative years had been influenced by cultural and language factors. Ilisapeci and Rani had both suffered from negative taunts or comments about their colour. Rani’s mother—herself a pale-skinned woman with a partly Thai heritage—felt Rani’s skin colour would ensure that she needed a large dowry to find a husband and that she should consider studying
as an alternative. Ilisepici’s maternal grandmother commented on not wanting any ‘black babies’, given that her daughter had married a South Pacific Islander.

Despite having spoken only Turkish to his grandparents who raised him for his first six years, having gone through school in Moreland, Ferhat’s English was excellent. However, he recounted that with the household they had to speak Turkish. If they spoke English his father would admonish them to speak Turkish to maintain the dominance of their culture within the family circle.

For Ben however, language was less of an issue. Although he started school only speaking Maltese shortly after emigrating, he quickly became fluent during his early primary schooling.

Box 7.14: Language and Cultural Issues

“My father insisted we should speak in our languages all the time. Because he was threatened by English. He didn’t speak a word.”
Rani, lines: 348-349

“Well they knew—my parents spoke English because it was fairly widely used within the country. But being so young—I probably, you know, I can’t remember how I was at five or six but I probably knew a few words here and there. It sort of gets mixed into the Maltese language with their history with the British colony, there was a lot of British influence within the country. So, it sort of mixed, you know, into the culture somewhat and so my parents knew English although not fairly fluently.”
Ben: lines 79-84

“So that wasn’t very pleasant. But now, this has changed now. My folks speak English too. They can, [write] basic letters, though grammar would be a problem of course. And vocabulary. Just the basic sort of thing.” [Describing being the family’s translator as a child]
Ferhat: lines 50-57

Low levels of literacy also placed people outside the dominant culture. Julie was the only interviewee to openly discuss the problems she encountered from having low levels of literacy, largely due to recurrent bouts of ill-health and
subsequent absenteeism. These exactly replicated the scenario described by Gladys in relation to her own adult literacy students with English speaking backgrounds who had either been abused as children or had suffered interrupted schooling from illness. As a consequence, they had never caught up with their peers at school and had become increasingly disenchanted with education and felt isolated from the learning culture.

Gladys referred repeatedly to the socially alienating effects of the low levels of literacy she had encountered in her career. She explained not only the obvious practicalities of the problem, but also the disempowering results of having low self-esteem and not having an understanding of social conventions.

Box 7.15: The Impact of no Learning Culture on Adults

“So if you’ve enrolled in an, like adult literacy thing, it was much more. It was—the learning was very much—learning to read and write is inconsequential in a way. It was how the person started to feel about themselves, that was the important thing to tackle. And you did that in any way you could.”
Gladys: lines 945-949

“I always wanted to go back and get my Leaving Certificate or something. I always felt that I was inadequate because I left in Form 3”.
Julie, lines: 758-759

“We had to use the staff toilets—which some of them hated. Our MIDs [students with mild intellectual disabilities] once opened the fire exit by mistake and they often splashed on the toilet seats. There was a real hooah the time one guy ate a pasty and wheeled a bike in through the library. He couldn’t even read or write his name so how could he read their signs?”
Jules, lines: 119-122

An unexpected personification of culture occurred through the commonly expressed pride in being working class, which a number of interviewees saw as defining them, using the same terminology as for ethnicity and other forms of cultural heritage. Of the 18 participants, only Lee commented that her parents were
middle-class, while Rani’s Indian-Malaysian family were rich and from a high caste. Biddy’s family could pay fees for her schooling and tended to live in areas which the Moreland people viewed as middle class, although she felt her family was not well off, so the fees were an issue.

A total of ten interviewees spoke vigorously about what they described as their working-class origins, often recounting ‘battler’ stories with great pride. Ilisapeci bemoaned that despite living in a disadvantage sole-parent family, her mother’s middle-class aspiration to live on Sydney’s North Shore isolated them from working-class relatives who lived in Marrackville. Julie mentioned being working-class in relation to her father’s work and his pattern of drinking on the way home where her mother kept his tea hot until exactly six, then threw it in the bin. Maeve told a similar story about her father, but deplored the loss of what she saw as a distinct Brunswick community of hard-working people with little money, while Jane’s family were in the ‘rag trade’—a very common occupation for Brunswick families before the sixties. May felt her working-class family had given her the social conscience which had led her into community services-related employment. Of her own background, Jules explained “I guess it was a poorer type of working-class family”.

George was proud of having been a labourer in both a furniture factory and in construction for many years, while Mike stated “I think we were disadvantaged as a community”. Ilisapeci, who grew up on the middle class North Shore suburbs of Sydney, attributed many of her later problems in life to feelings of alienation from her extended family, and deplored her mother’s refusal to live near them “but Mum was a snob. Mum didn’t, you know, she didn’t like Marrickville. She didn’t like the Inner West or the Western Suburbs.”
However, the most emphatic comments on class were Gladys’s, who told stories of being brought up in a working class housing estate in Birmingham.

Box 7.16: Gladys’s Comments on Class.

“Oh. I would reckon so. And particularly in England. Because in England there’s very much a very class conscious society. And people are fiercely proud of their class. Whereas over here people try and deny that they’re working class or whatever. Whereas over there—And even the way I speak is an indication of where I—of which class I belong to.”

“And a very interesting point though, which it took me till I came to Australia to get over this. At the teacher training college, there was a very strong emphasis on middle class values. And I tried to suppress all my working class pride and background and whatever and those values. And to act in a way that was middle class stuff. And it wasn’t until I came to Australia that I could actually throw all that off.”

Gladys, lines: 126-130, 631-636

Whatever form the family, ethnic or class-related culture assumed for the interviewees, it was apparent that its on-going impact on their sense of self-worth, confidence and connectedness was considerable.

7.1.6 Health

Of the 18 interviewees, 12 told stories of their own or their family’s health-related problems. It was apparent as the number of interviews increased, that the impact of severe or chronic health problems frequently disadvantaged people in many ways, creating a hiatus in their lives. This was clearly demonstrated when Julie referred to how chronic infections and migraines had impacted on her literacy, and how, in her adult life, a violent unemployed husband, her mother’s tumour and daughter’s arthritis dictated their social and financial status. Her son had also suffered testicular cancer at 21 and undergone two bouts of major surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy, effectively locking them into public housing and a range of government pensions and benefits.
Box 7.17: Male Interviewees on Health Issues

“Because I was over two months prem. I was put into the isolator [sic] and in a little hospital in Malta. That, I don’t know if it was many hospitals’ practices, but they didn’t cover the eyes which seems to have damaged the retinas to some extent or slowed down the development of the retina. So it was a combination of both, a combination of the eyes weren’t fully developed and a combination of being placed under lights without covers. And I’m very short sighted and—something I have to live with and something I cannot improve but may get worse through age.”
Ben: lines 153-154, 169-174

“I had a lot of depression when I was younger, and I was thinking, ‘Why am I like this?’ I had to sort of fight, fight, you know? Thinking, ‘There are people that are happy’. Thinking, ‘Why am I unhappy?’ sort of.”
Ferhat, lines: 371-374

“I was identified, I had blood pressure since I was twenty-one. And in the middle of the 90’s, 95-96, the—my coronary arterial disease was diagnosed. So that by the time 2000 came around, I opted for elective by-pass surgery. Rather than waiting for what all of my medical friends and my professional medical advisors said, was an inevitable heart attack. As it turned out I’d clearly had a form of stroke. I can’t remember what the initials stand for, a TIA form of—which results in small pinprick sized holes in the brain that disconnect your memory. So I have short-term memory problems.”
Mike, lines: 772-778

Jane recounted stories of panic attacks and agoraphobia which she felt had limited her life-choices because they returned cyclically and she always dreaded them coming back. Ben and Steve had both seen psychiatrists for some years, being treated for depression; Ben, after 14 years in the one job, became unemployed, and Steve after a car accident left him too incapacitated to work at his trade. In the same way, George was left partially disabled by an industrial accident leading to bouts of surgery, court cases and chronic health problems.

Cancer was mentioned on multiple occasions. Jules’s mother died from cancer, Maeve had been operated on for breast cancer, and—at the time of the interview—Julie’s mother had a tumour in the face. In the later period after the interviews had
been completed, Ben offered the information that his mother had been diagnosed with invasive breast cancer and was undergoing chemotherapy. Julie herself had a chronic thyroid problem needing medication for life and was also suffering from depression after supporting her two ill children. Like Mike, Rani—who later told that her younger sister had just died from cancer—had surgery for a heart condition and ongoing battles with high blood pressure.

Ilisapeci’s stories of drug-related health problems were related to her years working at King’s Cross as a prostitute and selling drugs to support her own and a boy friend’s heroin addictions. While interviewees Steve, Ben, Julie and George told of being treated for depression with a range of drugs such as Valium, Prozac or Zoloft, Ilisapeci’s drug use had begun at 15 with marijuana.

**Box 7.18: Ilisapeci’s Story of Drugs**

“I was, ‘Oh well. So what? Whatever’. So one night, a couple of weeks later, we decided to go up and score some dope. You know, this was just to smoke. And, ah, we got up to the Cross, and we couldn’t find anything. There was nothing to smoke. But there were a couple of guys hanging around, saying, ‘Oh. Do you want to chuck in and get a cap?’ You know. Which was smack. And Kelly said, ‘Oh. Do you want to?’ And I didn’t want to look like a dickhead and say, ‘Oh. No’. You know. So I said. ‘Yeah. Yeah. Cool. Whatever’. And so that’s how it started. And we scored and went down to this—Um. It’s gone now, it’s been built over. This old, this underpass underneath the freeway. Full of rubbish and old syringes. And occasionally dead bodies. Because people would OD down there, and nobody would find them”.

“So that’s what happened. I’d been booted out of every refuge. I had an escalating heroin habit that I had to work the streets to support. I also had a boyfriend who had an escalating heroin habit that I had to support too…. So obviously when I got paid my dole, the money would be all gone in one day. … Um. And of course—There you go. And I learnt all about getting ripped off, getting raped. Ilisapeci, lines: 945-960, 1084-1094

At the time of the interview, Ilisapeci had been a participant in a methadone program for some years, and although she often found it very difficult to cope, had
modified her life and was studying a tertiary level course. She repeatedly commented on how ACE had been a big factor in her change of lifestyle as she felt comfortable and was getting support and an education while on methadone. She confessed that for the first time, she felt that people were not looking down on her for her ethnicity and lack of education when she joined groups.

7.2 Community

A recurring thread within the interviews related not only to adult education within the community, but to the community itself as ACE was expected to participate very actively in community building.

Box 7.19: Interviewees on Community Work

“I think the ACE sector of all has tried hardest to keep—the, I suppose you might call community development project, for want of a better word, to the fore. At great cost to itself and its workers I have to add.”
Biddy: lines 728-731

“My personal views are that as a member of a community, as a citizen, I should put things back into the community in which I live. And so set out systematically to work out how to do that. And somebody suggested that I became involved in Further Education.”
Mike, lines: 402-404

“I wanted to do voluntary work. I was ready to do some voluntary work in my own community. … So I figured it made sense to me to actually volunteer within an environment that I already knew. So—and plus I had something to give back.”
May, lines 295-298

This research and the interviews referred to MAE as the face of community education, so initially ‘education’ was expected to provide the emphasis of the tripartite facets of the ACE acronym. The accepted use of each of the three words being where ‘adult’ was used to define the age of the participants and ‘community’ defined where learning took place as distinct from within an institution, and education being the major focus of the core business. However, the word
‘community’ recurred in the interviews with its emphasis linked to factors other than education, indicating that people reinterpreted the word differently, often in relation to ‘community development’.

7.2.1 Geographic Location

Many people referred to their place of birth, places of schooling and growing up, with an emphasis beyond the simple imparting of information. Because Rani, Ben, Ilisapeci, Gladys and George were born overseas, and Mike and May were from interstate, a general question asked for formative information could have been expected to have referred to the place of their origins. However, 16 of the 18 used localities to define their early lives, often in conjunction with a reference to social class and a sense of belonging. Of the two (Steve and Lee) who did not specifically mention their place of birth or region of growing up as formative influences, both referred to their sense of being a ‘local’ as an adult.

Place of birth seemed to be the primary defining characteristic for many of the participants especially (as could be expected) for those born overseas. Rani stated immediately that she was born in Malaysia to a business background. She then referred to a great many places where she had lived such as India, New Zealand, Darwin and Fiji, each having broadened her outlook.

Location was often referred to in terms of a sense of self-identity, particularly by Tom, Ferhat, Julie, Maeve and Ben who defined themselves in terms of their connection to Moreland schools and local shopping, streets and sporting venues. Location was also a strong factor in the decision to enrol in ACE because of the accessibility of local venues.
Maeve, lines 8-9, 28-34, 74-76

“...Where you’ve lived, I think that makes a bit of coming from the part of Brunswick I came from they were an interesting mob, I mean, crooks, gangsters and a wild sort of people.”

Ferhat, lines 609-614

The sense of a location having formed an individual was even evident in those participants who had expressed confidence and fewer difficulties in their lives. Frank commented that he had been born in Middle Park and moved to Bayswater during primary schooling. Biddy—possibly the most confident and articulate of the participants—made an amazing sixteen references to various locations including among others: Gippsland, Cheltenham, Hurstbridge, Diamond Valley, South Melbourne, Footscray and Korumburra. Tom referred to being a ‘local’ twice, but also made a resentful reference to being forced out of his local area—Coburg—to have to go to a secondary school in the Northcote area. This was not because of any negativity toward the school—which he enjoyed attending and succeeded in gaining excellent results—but because there were no viable options for computer specialisations within Moreland.

There were many other references in people’s interviews to being ‘a local’, with considerable pride often expressed about having grown up in the Moreland area. Despite having a Turkish family who maintained their language and cultural heritage,
Ferhat was at pains to express his sense of belonging to Moreland and how the family had lived between Brunswick and Coburg for the past twenty-five years. Significantly, he referred to himself as “a local member”, giving a clear indication of his perception of belonging to a distinct community, based on location.

This sense of membership from childhood was particularly evident in eight of the eighteen participants: Maeve, Julie, Ferhat, Ben, Jane, Jules, Neen and Tom. Maeve expressed the strongest sense of identification with the local government area of Moreland making ten references to Brunswick, four to Coburg, three to Moreland another four to Pascoe Vale, all former local suburbs which became parts of Moreland in the council amalgamations of 1995. As well as the frequency of her mentions, she had a finely attuned sense of the minutiae which differentiated each location from the other—even if only one street difference. Maeve also encapsulated the sense of ‘other’ in relation to suburbs out of the Moreland area, particularly in relation to those being from what she perceived to be a different social class and alienated academic culture, describing when she had an administrative position.

Box 7.21: Maeve on Belonging

“There is sort of more of a community atmosphere [in Coburg]. But Pascoe Vale, no, not South. Maybe up the other end, but not South.”

“Well I didn’t go into the—I mean I went down to get my lunch at the Union Hall once and the fellow said ‘Let’s all go up to Lygon Street’. I said “I’m only working in the office.” … He said ‘Do you want to come up?’ and I thought ‘I don’t know if I belong here’.”

Maeve, lines: 109-112, 592-595

The location of ACE centres was one of the most vital expressed by most participants, as—at the times of the interviews—14 of the 18 lived in the local government area of Moreland, which was often an expected characteristic of ACE,
given that many centres developed from a bottom-up movement to create a learning community—such as occurred at MAE.

An aspect of this local community factor was in relation to proximity to transport and to the use of community venues such as libraries and neighbourhood houses for classes and administrative offices.

Box 7.22: Accessibility of Venues

“Well, the fact that it offers so much and it’s actually accessible. I like the fact that you can really for a couple of minutes, you know, you can speak to someone. I mean, that’s it.”

“Ahh. I mean, you know, being local, I mean, I just live around the corner, it’s only five minutes. And I’m always hanging around the library.”

Ferhat: lines 549-451, 609-610

“Libraries are always good to be in, you know. Libraries are good places. I’d been at-in 2000 I sort of wanted to do something. So I went to one of the local Neighbourhood Houses, and I did a couple of, you know, I did some sewing classes there. I helped out in the Brunswick Neighbourhood House. And that was good. And I, I thought, you know, I’d sort of kind of like to continue my education in some way or something.” … “Yes. I must have seen the notice in the Library. I just thought, ‘OK’.”

Ilisapeci: lines 1612-1217, 1621

This emphasis on local geographic area replicated Hiemstra’s (2002b) definition of a horizontal community which was discussed in Chapter 2 (pp. 24-27), emphasising not only the physical accessibility which suited people with low levels of car ownership, close public transport routes and parking facilities in shopping centres, but also comfort for people with limited physical mobility and other health problems such as George.

Box 7.23: Ben on the ACE Community

“It’s like a little community working together, I mean, like any community it doesn’t always run smoothly and, you know, there are a lot of bumps. But I think people still feel that, you know”.

Ben, lines 256-258
This concentration on location is one of the defining qualities of an ACE organisation, implying that the ACE acronym itself stands more for adult education in a specifically defined community location, rather than the delivery of adult education in a community facility.

7.2.2 Diversity

The local government area of Moreland has as its catchphrase “One community, proudly diverse”. As a very multicultural community, MAE’s aim was to have a proportionate representation of the local demographics at all levels of the organisation. The statistics for MAE shown in Chapter 5 (pp. 182-183) demonstrated that this goal was being achieved in part by the business practices such as the marketing and promotional activities of MAE. Exemplifying this goal of being demographically representative of the area was the composition of the 2004 MAE committee which had people who spoke multiple languages, one of whom also had a significant physical disability, and two others had a relative with a psychiatric disability who attended classes at MAE. Despite the diversity of their origins and attributes, they shared the commonalities of a commitment to supporting their local community through unpaid work and collective core values related to education and connectedness.

However, it was through the dialogue and stories of the interviewees that the goal of multicultural appreciation could best be seen to have filtered through the whole organisation. While the interviewees themselves replicated the diversity of the organisation in terms of age, culture and language, gender and disability, their dialogue unconsciously reflected the largely inclusive nature of the Moreland area.

Seven of the interviewees, however, tended to view diversity in terms of language and culture, and did not include age, gender and disability as difference.
Nor did they identify any of the core values or traditions relating to diversity, although different groups of interviewees did recognise diversity as applying to other groups with special needs. Those who had worked with youth or seniors—in a paid or unpaid capacity—such as Ben, Biddy, Gladys and Mike, recognised age-related groups as reflecting difference. This also applied to people working with—or suffering from—heath problems and disabilities such as Ben, George, Steve, May, Gladys, Rani and Mike.

Tom, who worked in a corporate environment, articulated surprise that during his long association with the organisation since childhood, he had seen no instance of discrimination in people at MAE, quoting the mixing and integration he had witnessed at social occasions and Christmas parties for fourteen years. Rani commented on how perceptions of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) students tended to be based on simplistic misconceptions such as that Iranians and the Iraqis did not speak together socially despite all speaking Arabic, when in fact they often spoke a range of dialects which were not interchangeable and their scripts were entirely different.

There are also common misconceptions held by MAE students, such as that all of Moreland’s Middle-Eastern populations are Muslim and Arabic speakers when a high proportion of the organisation’s AMEP students (recent migrants) from Iraq were Christian Assyrians and Chaldeans. As a number of interviewees commented, MAE relied on mixing many multicultural groups through food, children, pregnancy, and shared celebrations.

Having herself migrated to Australia as an adult, Rani’s interview often gave indications of the problems facing new arrivals—despite her existing knowledge of English, and her own post-graduate qualifications and experience. Ilisapeci, on the
other hand—having lived a traumatic and often violent life—looked longingly back toward the possibly idealised Utopian world of Island life from which she had been forcibly removed during a custody battle. Both however, accurately encapsulated the sense of displacement and isolation which is implicit in the migrant experience.

Box 7.24: The Alienation of Migration

“We both sacrificed a good professional career to come here. I was high school principal of a very renowned school. And so was J... . We sacrificed that and came here. … For a couple of years I felt a sense of loss. Because I was a known entity in Fiji. I was President of Fiji Principal’s Association … I had the status. I was recognized. I was in the Examination Board. I was, you know, I did a lot of significant things. I was a very well known unionist in the Teacher’s Union. And I lost everything, I was just nobody here. That hit me.”

“It was interesting because it taught me humility, I think, coming here. You know, like you take it for granted you’re known. … And it sort of depressed me for a few years actually.”

Rani, lines: 290-304, 313-319

“It would have been completely different. All my cousins, they’ve lived happy, healthy lives in the village [in Fiji]. And, ah, Mum, as I was growing up at times, she regretted. I think she regretted what she’d done. I remember her saying, ‘We should have stayed in the village’. … I would have probably had a better life, had I grown up in the village.”

“You did get a couple of racist, racist taunts. When I went to Queenwood, I was the first girl of, you know, South Pacific Islander extraction to go to Queenwood. And so that was sort of difficult too….”

Ilisapeci, lines: 62-84, 1555-1559

Ferhat—who had been associated with MAE for eight years in various capacities—used humour to ensure that people were comfortable with their own cultural and family customs and differences. A typical example was in the following story which he originally wrote as part of a group of young male Work for the Dole participants, both to entertain and ensure the group’s cohesion as they were from Muslim and Christian families. Significantly, however, as an interviewee, he laughed seven times during the retelling of this story which also indicated that he used its
retelling as a means of dealing with his own embarrassment and discomfort at having lived his life bordering two cultures and languages.

Box 7.25: Ferhat on Circumcision

“Well when we first went to Turkey, a few things that I didn’t expect. They had paid for a circumcision for me. I had no—I was about nine. So that was a bit of a shock. It dawned on me later they were starting to prepare the whole thing. It was a full-on traditional one. Yeah. It was in front of two hundred people. I think I’ve destroyed it [the video] actually. They used one of those razors. … I watched it done. I was watching it. Um, they did inject something. But it was sort of (gestured at lower stomach) in a different spot. Yeah. Just higher. I mean, I did feel it, and it was sort of bleeding. I could have screamed but—Well, I was nine years old. I mean, you know, I was in the moment. I had no time to get embarrassed. I just wanted to get this over and done with! People just partying on. It was in a, like a hall. So there was all dancing, and you know, while we rested on a bed. No. I wasn’t dancing. I couldn’t dance. … It was the family—very costly too.”

Ferhat, lines: 171-272 (abridged)

Despite a positive commitment to appreciating diversity in general, not all aspects of creating an inclusive community were constructive. Despite a documented aim of having a representative committee of management, the increasing complex levels of business language posed problems for most MAE members but particularly for people from different language groups.

Gladys, having worked as part of a very diverse committee at Moreland for over a year, was unsure of how appropriate it was to have participants making decisions on details about which they may not have been clear due to low levels of conversational English combined with limited knowledge of business.
Box 7.26: Voluntary Committees and Business Planning

“They were a bit nervous about it, the whole strategic planning. And, you know, you can’t do it because you’re not business people or whatever. They were a bit frightened about it, and they found it a bit threatening.”
May, lines: 325-328

“I mean, there’s nothing wrong with having a diverse committee. But it’s great, it’s really good. But, at the same time, the—I’m wondering whether, you know, maybe it’s looking at having a committee—I’m not happy with this idea. But having a committee that’s separate from your—A local advisory group.”
Gladys: lines 1453-1456

The model which she proposed—having a diverse group as advisors and a business group making decisions, went against all of the policies and practices of MAE documentation (*Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Business Plan, Version 6, 2004*). This was because it would have removed potential committee members from community decision-making based on their difference. Committee members had voted to continue to be inclusive at all levels of the organisation and to be supportive as part of a risk management assessment (*Moreland Adult Education Assoc: Risk management folder, 2005*) to avoid problems related to lack of understanding of either the complexity of business terminology or English.

### 7.2.3 Social Capital

The aspects of ACE which were invested in creating social capital were mentioned repeatedly by May, Gladys, Biddy, Rani, Mike and Julie, using a range of terms such as community development, community-building and connectedness.

In the formative years of MAE, the notion of social capital was largely interpreted in terms of nineteenth-century philanthropy. Within the last ten to twelve years, this changed focus although the intentions remain the same. Whereas notions of charity were surrounded with religious connotations—such as in Maeve’s
description of the old organisation collecting for the Red Cross and links with the local Baptist Church—a number of interviewees (Jane, George, May, Ben, Neen) referred to ‘helping out’, ‘putting in’ and ‘putting back’ indicating a personal sense of commitment to strengthening the local community. On the contrary, however, Gladys felt that the interest in people volunteering was diminishing.

Box 7.27: Working with Volunteers

“Ah. That’s a very personal thing probably for those people. I can’t answer for everybody, but I’m assuming that, um, they’re people that like to help other people. And, um, have time on their hands that they can, you know, perhaps get something out of it themselves, by helping”
George: lines 709-712

“I don’t think there’s many people that—There aren’t enough people who—to volunteer. It’s a problem actually for community organisations. Every community organisation that I know, with the exception of PRACE, is struggling to maintain a committee of management. And I think people in the old days you used to get people who just ‘OK. I can help in the local community’.
Gladys: lines 1429-1433

“But try and get a commitment for at least three months so that drain is—the impact of that drain is lessened. But strategically what we had to do, in that sense, is I only work with one volunteer at a time. It’s very intensive and we can’t manage it. I interviewed ten people that time and only took one. And I said to all of them, ‘I won’t be taking another person till this one finishes’. Because you have to be just sensible about it.”
May: lines 384-392

Although in the early days of MAE the organisation had up to 40 volunteers at any one time, numbers had been much lower due in part to the amount of expertise required of them. This was explained in part by May’s comment in Box 6.31. Having been a co-ordinator in a local women’s neighbourhood house, then worked at MAE as the Managing Diversity and MC2 project workers, she later became the manager of another ACE centre in the northern suburbs of Melbourne which gave her a real insight into the multiplicity of levels which engage volunteers.
At MAE, the idea of social capital had permeated the whole organisation. The committee had adapted its finances to purchase resources to support volunteers and incorporated training for all staff, providing venues and equipment to support them in a variety of capacities. This commitment was linked to its core values (pp.192-193).

7.2.4 Core Values

Like most ACE centres, MAE was owned and managed by a voluntary committee of management, which was comprised of local people. Thus its core values and strategic statements were defined by its stakeholders, half of whom had served at various times as committee members.

Biddy was the one participant who questioned the inward-looking perspective of a community organisation which was to some extent both its weakness and also its strength. From her own experience of multiple educational sectors, she expressed a concern for the parochialism of some ACE centres which tended to pride themselves on being anti-intellectual, which does not necessarily apply to all organisations.

Despite being grounded in their local communities, many such as MAE had broader policies on networking and liaising with TAFE, Higher Education, local businesses and councils. These policies aimed at pathwaying students into tertiary education and encouraging participation in networks such as the RMIT community partnership LearnLinks, to provide a smooth transition into tertiary education. However, having to compete for shrinking funding created defensiveness in most ACE organisations, including MAE. The reason for this combativeness was historically based in the government’s commitment to compulsory, competitive tendering in the nineties, and also to the closure of many local schools. Moreland High, Newlands High, Merrilands High and Coburg High schools were all closed in the name of economic rationalism.
Gladys also queried the pedagogical basis on which much of adult education was grounded, querying the employment of people whose main goal was altruistic rather than based on education being a profession.

Box 7.28: Gladys on ACE’s lack of Pedagogy

“I think there’s something I don’t like about ACE. I think that it’s probably the same for all areas of education. I think that there’s some practitioners in there that shouldn’t be in there. And I don’t think there’s a thorough enough grounding in pedagogy. For a lot of people working in ACE. I think people think that it’s an easy option. Whereas my belief is that people who have been failed by the education system need the absolute best.”
Gladys: lines 1072-1077

Four interviewees made negative comments on the regional offices of the ACFE sector, believing them to be alienated from their constituencies, with little knowledge of the demographics or needs of local communities.

Box 7.29: Lack of Regional Support

“The other thing I find about ACE is, you know, there was a time when the ACE head office was more connected with what was happening in the, you know, in the mainstream. That offering of services and so on. Now it looks like ACE head office is only, you know, responsible to see that work is carried out and papers are returned to them. They should come out and see what’s happening. And you don’t get that connectedness again, you know.”
Rani, lines: 717-722

“But I think also, you know, just in our region, I think the instability in our regional office. And I don’t know where this goes, but the instability in our regional office and what’s happened in that. You don’t, we didn’t realise the support we were getting from our regional office. We’d bitch about it and whatever, but I think in the last two years what’s been going on there has destabilised our whole sector in the Northern Region. And I think that we’re all very unsure and nervous and anxious. And I think that it’s actually undermined people’s confidence to operate as professional organisations. Yeah, I think that’s a huge impact.”
May, lines: 466-473

“And mixing in the local community, I can assure you that local councils in the western metropolitan region of Melbourne, did not know that ACFE existed as a sector. … I visited all nine of those councils to talk to them about how they would provide services and funding for that sector. As their sector of education if you like, their Department of Education level. And most of them had absolutely no idea.”
Mike, lines: 347-352
An additional negative that community-based organisations had was an extension of the concern expressed by Biddy in relation to parochialism, where stakeholders formed such strong bonds that they were in danger of jealousy and possessiveness as in any relationship. In psychological terms this involved a great deal of projection of unrealistic expectations of permanent bonding and transference of disappointments and anger to other participants—usually staff but other personnel as well. It seemed inevitable that the core values and cultures of individuals in an organisation become melded into those of the program, both to its detriment and advantage.

One of the problems with these expectations was that staff were only able to achieve outcomes commensurate with limited funding, scarce resources and often cramped and unsafe venues. Although flexibility of delivery was one of the much-vaulted positives of the sector, for students with no understanding of how RPL/RCC, one-to-one support and other alternate learning options, this flexibility posed a problem.

Box 7.30: Ownership of Classes

“I suppose the flaw that I found with the dynamics in the group, you know, with that rolling intake. The people coming in demanding time, demanding that you do a million things for them. And that’s probably a flaw. Although they have the right to do that I suppose.”
Lee: lines 145-147

“Well I couldn’t take -I don’t like injustice of any kind, you know. She came and sat somewhere and they said to her ‘That’s my place’. I said ‘Nobody has got a freehold property, you know, here. If you come late you take the chair that is available’.
Rani: 619-622

This lack of understanding created as many problems as it solved. Although it ensured longevity of connection as people progressed through stages and positions
within a centre, their sense of ownership often became stronger, creating possessiveness within groups.

Although this sense of ownership often had negative repercussions between individuals in classes needing teacher intervention to precipitate resolution, it was also a manifestation of the sense of connectedness which was often evident in the dialogue of the interviewees. The willingness to undertake voluntary tutoring, to sit on committees despite fears of responsibility for disempowering business terminology and the sense of being part of a geographic cluster of venues, services and people, created a strong sense of community in the majority of the interviewees, reinforcing Heimstra’s (2002b) definition (Chapter 2, p.27), and explaining the sense of cohesion which permeated MAE.

7.3 Concluding Comment

The people involved in this research provided the data which was discussed in this chapter through a generalised, descriptive analysis during which it became evident that a number of factors such as disadvantage had impacted on many people’s childhoods and later adulthood. This created a picture of a sector which had a heavy emphasis on supporting its participants through transformative learning, and storytelling to make sense of their own world and the worlds of the others around them.

The majority of the interviewees felt they were part of a distinct community which had formed around the theme of learning, and often expressed a real resistance to changing what they perceived as the core values of MAE such as personal support, negotiation and flexibility. In resisting change the interviewees were imposing their own form of internal pressure on the centre to remain true to its values and they resented the external pressures which were driving those changes—business and education—which were described in Chapter 6.
Between the dual forms of pressure—externally with a business and accreditation focus, and internally because of the participants’ resistance to changing core values—it became apparent that the people of MAE saw it being crushed by conflicting demands and by 2004, they were starting to doubt its ability to sustain its operations in the long-term.
8. FINDINGS and PROPOSITIONS

"Because my life had done a complete three-sixty in the last three years. ...It's been twenty-seven years since I've been in any sort of formal education, for me coming back, it was just the nicest way for me to be eased back into education in some form, where I felt very comfortable. I wasn't, I didn't feel threatened or inadequate or competitive. I just felt that it was, it was just a nice transition for me.” Lee

This chapter documents the final analysis of the data researched previously to determine the findings of the research. In Chapters 4-5, the organisational case study of MAE was examined as part of an historical educational study. In Chapters 6-7, the data gained from interviewing 18 ACE people was recorded in the form of descriptive analysis in accordance with five “tactics for generating meaning” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 248), that is: noting patterns, identifying themes, clustering, counting, and making contrasts and comparisons. In order to integrate the raw data from the organisational and individual cases, this chapter compares the ACE sector, MAE and its people during the 1994 to 2004 period to determine any differences and patterns. With the pre-existing research examined in the literature review in Chapter 2 plus the general overview of issues and opinions supplied by survey participants from the northern region of ACFE reported in Chapter 4 (pp. 93-110), all data was integrated to complete a second level conceptual categorisation.

This chapter then completes a “third level conceptual perspective analysis” (Glaser, 1998, p.136) by discussing the findings in terms of the propositions which emerged from the integrated analyses, using three levels of engagement. Firstly, this was at the sectoral level which discusses the changes in relation to ACE. Secondly, MAE is discussed to establish what changes have occurred in the 10 years being researched, and the third level examines the findings relating to the people. The later sections of the chapter re-examines the findings established from the data supplied by the interviewees to determine whether or not they possess common characteristics,
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before relating any emerging groups to recurring themes such as personal change and proposing the reasons behind any encountered changes.

Working under three main headings: sectoral, organisational and individual, the first—often interlinked—propositions related to changes in the sector of ACE itself. The next two sets of findings emerged from the organisational comparison of statistical data which was endorsed by the data supplied by survey respondents and interviewees. The second analysis of the individual data produced a group of five conceptual categories which emerged from the respondents and interviewees in relation to the connection between people and community-connectedness.

8.1 Sectoral

The ACE sector itself was often raised during this study, both because it placed MAE within a wider context, but also because the survey respondents and interviewees referred to it in terms of a post-mainstream educational sector—although others asked what ‘ACE’ actually meant.

8.1.1 Sustainability

One of the changes and frequently recurring criticisms by ACE respondents and interviewees related to the bureaucratic changes which had occurred to the sector.

Box 8.1: Bureaucratic Pressures

“With more money coming in and the way the government and their bureaucrats have a need to say ‘Well, we give them all this money. How do we know it’s been well spent?’ Rather than listen to the ACE sector and try and build something from that, they’ve imposed something over the top.”

Gladys, lines: 1153-1156

This comment typified the bitterness with which the latest instances of government funding cuts were received by interviewees who had previously perceived them to be supportive of the disadvantaged. This negativity was best
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exemplified during the 16th February, 2006 meeting between the state education minister and ACEVic which reported that Minister Kosky asserted four points:

First, that the ACE sector SCH rate was comparable with the TAFEs.

Secondly, that the TAFE SCH was higher due to their delivery of higher levels.

Thirdly, that the only way to increase the ACE SCH rate would be to lessen the total number of hours.

Fourthly, that ACE’s responses to past increases were “lukewarm” which gave her department no incentive to increase the rates (ACEVic, 2006, p. 2 emailed report).

These points negated the four key strategies in the Ministerial Statement on ACE: To broaden the role of adult and community education, to recognise specific groups of learners, to enhance the sustainability of adult community education provision and to invest in adult community education (Kosky, 2004, p. 24). Using words like ‘broaden’, ‘recognise’, ‘enhance’ and ‘investment’ these four strategies were intended to imply positive—and not negative—results for the sector.

Box 8.2: Funding

“I see a change now particularly with this new funding, round three, funding they’re offering now. I think we’re on a slippery slope to somewhere that’s kind of a bit scary. And it depends who interprets what the funding body say and what, and that’s the Regional Director I’m thinking of, but it depends who’s translating, I guess, what’s been written.”

May, lines: 161-165

ACE organisations were facing enormous pressures without the physical infrastructure or adequate resources to maintain community connectedness while becoming savvy in business practices, factors referred to by most interviewees (for example Mike, Biddy, Julie, Ben, May and Jules).
Box 8.3: Conserving Funds

“I think you try and make do with what you’ve got. And you know, part of the challenge in ACE is, you know, being able to do that and because, you know, funding is always an issue. I know one of the courses that I did through the multimedia here, is working with digital audio and working with digital audio you need the software to be able to work with that. And sometimes even hardware to be able to work with that. So instead of knowing probably we couldn’t probably afford to buy the software to run the course, well then I used thirty day trial software from the companies that manufacture them and, you know.”
Ben, lines: 434-441

The implementation of OH&S and other risk management issues were described as difficult to achieve when working in council venues or rented premises without funding to purchase equipment, pay tradesmen or maintain resources.

This also applied to a number of other areas such as the pressure to extend and create networks with other community services, local councils and employers. This liaising with other sectors to access alternate funding, increase business potential and cluster with government and non-government bodies disregarded possibly antithetical sets of values and goals, and were to be achieved without financial support.

ACE appeared to be suffering a chronic illness which may yet prove terminal from being forced to replicate aspects of a TAFE environment without the subsidised infrastructure and resources to support the staffing, business and education.

Box 8.4: Staff Employment

“They’re not paid for holidays, they don’t get sick leave, I can’t guarantee them employment from one year to the next. Although supposedly we can for the next three years. Although in fact we can’t because we could face up to a 9 or 12% cut, genuine cut. I mean they say 3% a year, but that actually translates into a lot more than that. So I don’t, I can’t - next year I can offer my teachers stuff, work, but the year after that, I still can’t guarantee them.”
May, lines: 231-236
Part of the illness which was endemic in ACE was related to the cost of resources, equipment, insurance and other overheads such as rent, auditing and IT. The cost of registration, purchasing and upgrading national training packages and state-accredited course curricula, such as the CGEA, CSWE and ESL Frameworks placed a huge burden on organisations, especially as training packages were updated every three years, often requiring purchase of new documents, rewriting assessment and delivery plans and paying to have registration extended. The reduction of ACFE funding by 3% compounding over three years, could prove to be a fatal blow for many organisations.

**SECTORAL FINDING 1**

ACE is faced with diminishing financial support from the government and steadily increasing costs for salaries and infrastructure which it cannot meet. Even the illusion of sustainability is slowly diminishing, threatening the continued existence of many organisations in the sector.

### 8.1.2 Changing Target Groups

Funding bodies showed a lack of understanding about the needs of ACE participants concerning changed target groups. Decisions were made about the loss of funding for any AQF level course above 1 or 2 without consultation. (The exception to this was the Certificate IV/Dip FE which was delivered by few ACE centres—in fact the only ACE program delivering the Diploma level in 2005 was MAE). This decision both diminished the educational status of the sector and reduced people’s choice. For adults unable to pay the combined costs of courses, resources and travel, or those without the mobility to travel to a TAFE, this effectively locked them out of educational pathway likely to lead to employment or higher studies.
Box 8.5: Selective Entry

“We won’t fund you to work with people with higher - who might have higher than year 12, we won’t fund you to offer certificates at sort of II, III level. I think they’re confused about - I don’t think the people on the funding body and at that end really have a good understanding.”
May, lines: 174-177

The planning documents for 2006 stated that ACFE-funded organisations in the Northern Metropolitan region were to prioritise: shifting delivery towards non-year 12 adults over the next three years, targeting males over 45 and people over 55 years of age as they were under-represented in ACE, shifting delivery away from some, toward other disadvantaged groups plus prioritising delivery by industry—rather than students’—needs (ACFE evidence guide 2005: Northern Metropolitan ACFE Region, 2005, p. 4).

The current Adult, Community and Further Education Act stated that two of its primary objects were to: “provide for and promote learning opportunities for adults in a manner and setting appropriate to their needs” and to “support and strengthen the capacity of local communities to respond to and meet the educational needs of members of their communities” (Adult, Community and Further Education Board: Policy and funding plan, 2005-2007, 2005, p. 5).

SECTORIAL FINDING 2

The implementation of current restrictions to educational opportunities for adults and limiting ACE organisations’ opportunities to offer choice to people regardless of their characteristics, does not support the objectives of the ACFE Act.
8.1.3 Marketing

There was continued resentment that despite the rhetoric which had surrounded the expectations of the ‘Come in, Cinderella’ era, ACE remained just as anonymous and was still an unacknowledged sector of education despite being funded by the same government departments as universities and TAFEs.

There was a lack of marketing or ‘branding’ of ACE which could only have been effectively promoted at the state government—or even national—level.

Box 8.6: ACE Anonymity

“There are a number of people, even those who work in ACE say, ask that question. When I say that they say ‘what is ACE?’ Which really surprised me.”
May, lines: 101-102

Unlike for many programs, MAE’s physical position in the municipal libraries meant that many local residents, and even some staff members, assumed incorrectly that the classes were funded and organised by the local council.

There was an urgent need to market a sector relatively unknown at national, state and local government levels due to lack of branding—even in academic institutions and the general community—despite the rhetoric in many reports promising entry to mainstream education.

Ironically, given that a large proportion of this study was about change when considering ACE, there was also a strong sense that in regard to a number of factors, the sector was fixated in its initial period of growth. As mentioned previously, branding and marketing were almost non-existent but the most difficult issue to describe and evaluate was related to recognition of ACE as a legitimate educational sector.
The ACE sector received formal acknowledgement over thirty years ago (Beazley, 1973), which was endorsed during the potentially expansive ‘Cinderella’ days (Come In Cinderella: The Emergence of Adult and Community Education, 1991; Crombie, 1996), at the defining national ‘MOVEET’ conference (National Policy: ACE, Hobart, 1993) and in more recent statements by the state education minister (Kosky, 2004). These were seminal moments of promise for ACE organisations.

**SECTORAL FINDING 3**

There were few differences between the initial statements on ACE by K. Beazley Snr in 1973 and those made since that year. All quoted rhetoric around the concepts of lifelong learning, the value of adult education—especially for the disadvantaged—and spoke optimistically about growth of the sector, its recognition, adaptability and sustainability. In reality, few people who had not been engaged in the sector had ever heard of it, demonstrating its lack of branding by government departments and marketing as a viable educational sector.

### 8.1.4 Multiplicity

It became increasingly obvious that for most respondents and interviewees, ACE was a community of people engaging in education—not an adult education organisation placed in a community. The community was defined by the commonality of people, their shared values and characteristics—such as longevity of engagement within the sector or the multiplicity of their roles. The definition used by ACFE used the same words—Adult Education in the Community—but moved the emphasis toward the ‘adult’ and ‘education’ and away from an awareness of ‘community’, using it purely in the geographical sense and not in the sense defined by Heimstra (2002b). His use emphasised the communal aspect of shared interests with defined geographic emphasis, which was also characterised by familial and other social links.
ACE had been researched through individual groups of participants who were usually defined by the results of exoteric research frequently conducted by academics working in higher education, and not people actively engaged in the sector, as stated by Praetz and Sanguinetti. Although ACE research circles were formed in late 2005, centres received a token payment for supplying staff expertise, so it was largely funded by participating organisations and the research revolved around academically-prescribed subjects rather than those identified specifically by the ACE sector. Studies conducted on staff, students or volunteers isolated each group negating ACE’s status as a distinct—if different—educational sector and each individual program as an individually diverse but bonded unit.

**Box 8.7: Multiplicity of Roles**

“Where I was - did the Certificate II in Information Technology and then down the track now I’ve become a trainer and co-ordinator. So I - so for here I sort of run the Certificate II in IT, the Certificate III in IT, the Certificate II in Business as well as sort of co-ordinating the programs.”

Ben, lines: 462-467

Because the antithetical staff-student polarity was reduced in ACE it tended to obscure the boundaries between roles and responsibilities where students became staff and staff became students. It also created a connectedness more equated to the membership of a community organisation even when achieving educational outcomes by alternate methods.

**SECTORAL FINDING 4**

There was less emphasis on polarised roles than in mainstream education. In ACE a large percentage of people undertook a multiplicity of roles, which often led to being engaged in the sector for long periods. This created a sense of organisations being horizontal educational communities as defined by Heimstra (2002b), delivering relevant education through different styles and by unconsciously satisfying a range of psychological needs.
8.2 Organisational

Sited within the Northern suburbs of Melbourne, MAE provided most of the data and people for this case study of an ACE organisation. Characterised by a very multicultural group of people, the organisation had expanded its funding and delivery dramatically in 1999 and again in 2003, but at the time of this study had entered a period of caution because of its financial commitments, decreases in ACFE funding and the demands of multiple audits.

8.2.1 Duality

From the comparison of the organisational case study in pre-1994, 1994 and 2004, it initially appeared that the former Coburg Adult Literacy group and MAE were life-cycles of an organisation which could be equated to developmental and mature stages, analogous to childhood and adulthood. As part of this initial examination, funding and increased costs raised questions of whether or not the organisation—like a number of others in the northern region—would survive to enter a settled period of existence or decline into age and debility before closure.

However, on more detailed examination, MAE’s apparent life-stages were more like comparing two separate organisations—the pre and post Carmichael/Finn/RTO/AQTF eras’ programs exemplified by old developing programs fixated between post-nineteenth century notions of philanthropy and the later post-Freirean concepts of empowerment. This was exemplified by the old ‘charitable’ volunteers who just wanted to help people and the new ‘economic’ type who wanted corporate experience for their resumes and employment. There was little similarity between minimalist funding applications of the pre-1995 years compared to the accountability and the complexity of the LearnLinks, Dip FE and later business negotiations involving MAE. This difference was also characterised by the former
social committees and modern business committees of management, and the current need for staff to have a multiplicity of qualifications and experience with a mandatory assessment and workplace training accreditation.

As the organisation moved from late 2005 into 2006 during the latter part of this research, there were indications of a third, incipient change which could be equated to an aging or declining period. With a market saturated by TAFEs, other ACE organisations and private RTOs, funding had stabilised and was not increasing, the number of accredited courses remained the same and the organisation maintained its delivery into only four venues—formerly up to 11. With the reduction of 3% to ACFE funding (with no allowance for the CPI, this equated to 6% loss) for 2006, delivery of courses had to be reduced for the year, effectively penalising many of Moreland’s part-time staff and disadvantaged students. After a decision by the ACFE Board, the Commonwealth Equipment Grant was decreased from $3800 by $500 in 2004 (Hebert, 2005, p. Email), minimising the organisation’s ability to even upgrade administrative IT resources. With increased salaries, increased rent, the costs associated with maintaining registration, insurance, curriculum documents, training packages and scopes, 2006 loomed as the first year the organisation would actually see a financial deficit after generating just sufficient to cover depreciation and leave provisions in 2005.

**ORGANISATIONAL FINDING 1**

Researching the early Coburg organisation which conducted only literacy teaching and the MAE of 2004 was like encountering two different organisations except in relation to certain core values prioritising disadvantaged people. The arc of the organisation seemed to have peaked and started to decline, possibly following other northern suburbs programs such as BCEP, Eltham and Northcote Adult Literacy programs which had closed.
8.2.2 Pressure to Change

The major responses from all sources relating to perceptions of change resulted in multiple issues and themes which were categorised into four ‘dimensions’; two of which were related to business and education, and another two to socio-personal and community factors.

Although allied to the first organisational finding, the second finding was that there were some marked changes in relation to business and education and that these externally driven changes were placing extreme pressures on ACE organisations such as MAE, making their existence tentative because of increased costs, reducing funding and difficulties achieving expensive compliance and risk issues.

Because these pressures were being implemented from external sources, anxiety and fears of closure were constant states for most paid and unpaid staff members. There was a clear indication of resistance to change and resentment of the pressure to implement systems which were not seen as relevant or necessary when MAE was found compliant in every audit.

The most negative responses from each of the three data sources—organisational comparison, surveys and interviews—related to increased pressures on administration, accountability for management and the imposition of political over local priorities. Statements also often expressed comments concerning pressure on ACE to replicate the TAFE sector without the funding and resources to sustain change.
This pressure to shift away from the social-connectedness which people associated with MAE drew considerable resentment from both the interviewees quoted in Box 8.8 and also Maeve, Jules, Ferhat and Rani, none of whom blamed the sector, but some less explicit external ‘others’ which represented a number of government departments or agencies and funding bodies.

While this external pressure led to changes in business practices, increases in accreditation and staff qualifications, the organisation was equally under pressure from its people to maintain many of its existing practices and maintain its connectedness to the local community. Many people felt that the need to fulfil funding requirements, maintain compliance and achieve all contracted outcomes would irrevocably destroy the core values of the organisation which were often reviewed but never changed in intention.
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Internal stress was also placed on the organisation by the participants’ resistance to change and their desire to maintain the self-defined directions they felt was being removed by funding and government bodies.

**ORGANISATIONAL FINDING 2**

MAE faced external pressure to change its core business and alter educational delivery, placing a great deal of stress on management and causing resentment in many of its people. The people’s desire to stay true to its core values and community-owned and managed status was causing internal resistance, resulting in the organisation being crushed in a situation it could not resolve.

**8.2.3 Connectedness**

The interviewees best expressed what MAE meant to them in terms of connectedness. Those who made few mentions of location and MAE were Biddy, May, Mike and Rani. None mentioned the other related facilities such as shopping, transport, parking, libraries and sport which local dwellers praised. None of these four had worked as a volunteer, or joined the committee, and all were paid staff. Another four (Frank, Lee, Steve and Jules) spoke of a number of links with the local area and MAE, and had lived in the area at various times.

But for ten of the interviewees (Ben, Ferhat, Gladys, George, Ilisapeci, Jane, Julie, Maeve, Neen and Tom) this sense of familiarity and attachment was extremely strong in relation to community and location. This figure did not include multiple mentions of each category, nor the degree of emotion attached to each use of the terms, but was indicative of the sense of familiarity and comfort each interviewee had with Moreland—both the LGA and ACE centre. Six had attended schools in the area, all lived in the local suburbs—seven since childhood—while Ferhat and Ilisapeci both mentioned their reliance on the comfort they gained from ‘hanging out’ in the local libraries. Maeve exhibited an immense knowledge of the minutiae of details of
local personalities going back to the Second World War, of the locally ascribed ‘class’ stratum, gossip and general details of local history. Julie and Jane were also well versed in local history and personalities.

Interviewees described MAE as performing a number of functions. This was largely because although its primary function was education, additional functions included creating a flexible and supportive venue for people either wanting support or to ‘put in’ to their community.

Not all attributes of ACE centres like MAE were seen to be being positive. Being stretched for funding meant that corners are often cut, venues were often sub-standard, resources insufficient and staff stressed from overwork and having to undertake non-teaching roles for which were not trained or experienced.

However, as a grass-roots organisation which had a proven record of ‘bottom-up’ development, MAE had succeeded in creating a community within a community, where people could fulfil a developmental or healing cycle which enriched their lives, and enacted a part of a psychical journey or individuation process.

Their connection was often related to two main factors. First, some kind of impoverishment in childhood through a multiplicity of forms such as financial deprivation, poor language or literacy levels, death and divorce of parents, poor health or a lack of support. Secondly, in adulthood, this usually took the form of a life-changing hiatus which may have built on the deprivations of childhood or been an event or series of events which took the individual away from an expected direction, such as major health problems, accidents or loss of employment. These dual influences often drove the psychological desire for connectedness to a community organisation. It suggested that the longevity of connection served as
either a replacement family or to create a sense of social cohesion which did not exist formerly.

The longevity of association first noted in the survey was another outcome of the interviews as well. There were multiple reasons for people’s initial involvement as participants and for subsequent returns, for example with Jane who had commenced in an ACE group eight years previously before undertaking a TAFE course and returning as a student to complete the RMIT Certificate 11 in IT (Applications), becoming a committee member and then a volunteer in order to maintain Centrelink payments.

Tom had been involved since he was a small boy attending Christmas parties and presentations, undertaking a helper’s role by distributing door tickets, tidying up and taking photos which he saw as volunteer activities before enrolling in an accredited unit to fulfil one of two additional requirements for his Business degree at RMIT. Rani had worked in three other ACE centres before Moreland and Ilisapeci had attended ACFE-funded classes in a neighbourhood house before finding MAE.

The multiplicity of roles could also fulfil a similar need by replicating the changing dynamics and functional responsibilities of the family unit as an individual moved between a dependent state through to independence to a sense of integration in the family/community.

**ORGANISATIONAL FINDING 3**

One of the driving forces for the people at MAE was to create and maintain the connection of a personal relationship in their local community with a supportive quasi-family in which they could engage through multiple roles and for either short or prolonged periods according to need. This often meant moving in and out of the sector as needs altered.
8.3 Individual Experiences

All of the 18 interviews conducted for this research gave a real—and often touchingly honest—insight into their personal and family lives, although some had more detail than others. One of the first of the factors related to the people being interviewed was the repetition of tales of disadvantage. While the memories of problems in childhood were often recounted with raw emotion, having remained very powerful, those of adulthood often contained passionate emotions of pain and anger. The events and circumstances fell into two distinct patterns. Those of childhood (with no actual defined age as a cut-off but related to independence) had a very strong motif of impoverishment while those of adulthood were related to a hiatus of some kind. While both of these problems at various life-stages are called ‘disadvantages’, in childhood they seemed to have characteristics more related to familial deprivation or loss so were referred to as ‘impoverishment’. For adults, the disadvantages were more commonly related to long or short episodes of personal trauma (accidents, ill-health, unemployment, divorce) so are referred to as a ‘hiatus’.

8.3.1 Impoverishment

Of the interviewees, 13 discussed examples of well-remembered childhood impoverishment still retained as strong memories in their adult lives. This was in relation to many possibilities such as lack of support, loss of a parent or close family-member, violence, low literacy or language levels, low self-esteem and learning problems. This was particularly evident for Ilisapeci, Ferhat, Ben, Steve, Julie, Maeve, Jules, Rani, George, Gladys, Mike and May. Despite the fact that the interviewees had a wide range of experiences and cultures, this implied that a characteristic of ACE which attracted people was the need to receive some kind of support, as well as a desire to rationalise personal events from their childhood lives.
The following table ‘scored’ the number of disadvantages interviewees reported, both in childhood (impoverishment) and adulthood (hiatus).

Table 8.1. Interviewees’ Stories of Disadvantage

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<td>5 5 6 7 7 8 12 14 15 15 19</td>
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By Biddy          Gl Gladys
Fr Frank          My May
Tm Tom            Bn Ben
Le Lee            Js Jules
Nn Neen           Sv Steve
Mk Mike           Mv Maeve
Jn Jane           Gg George
Rn Rani           Is Ilispeci
Fh Ferhat         Ji Julie

Note: Only single, recounted disadvantages were counted.

It was noticeable that for a number of people (Rani, Ben, Ferhat, Steve, George, Maeve, Ilispeci and Julie), instances of impoverishment in childhood seemed to be indicators of a greater number of instances of hiatuses later in life—whether or not they learnt easily within a school environment or in a wider, less-formal setting.

When these scores were totalled, there was a distinct continuum of total disadvantages in the interviewees which predicted the descriptive grouping on attitudes to education which was discussed on p. 256. The totals fell into four groups based on the number of combined disadvantaged people had discussed, from no reported issues to multiple instances spread over both child and adulthood.

INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES FINDING 1

Many interviewees told tales of impoverishment in literacy, language, finances, support-structures, health or family bonds through death or divorce, suggesting that their relationships with ACE and its people contained both a compensation for losses in childhood and a desire for psychological healing or closure.
8.3.2 Hiatus

As was also depicted in Table 8.1, people also reported many disruptions in their adult lives, creating a hiatus which required some form of support to traverse.

Another of the defining qualities which seemed to differentiate Frank was that he was one of the few (with Tom, Neen and Biddy) who reported none of the other factors which had caused a childhood hiatus or later life-changing experience. The number of disadvantages faced by a majority of the 18 people interviewed and representative of ACE was high given that this was not a direct question but resulted from the general enquiry into background information. Some people told another story when the tape ceased, then gave permission to turn it back on after offering more material. For example, this occurred in the following extract when the tape was again turned on and George became more noticeably articulate.

Box 8.9: George’s Interview

“My mother was a dressmaker and she had to go to work then, and I spent a lot of my time with my grandmother. Probably one of those values that were instilled in that time I was with her, and probably visits after have been. They’re the values that I’ve held through my life probably more. Probably one to five or something like that. I don’t know. I can’t remember really. But it was pretty young. But then there was times I was back there. I can remember a lot of those times actually, probably more so than when I was with my mother really, I suppose. You know, some of those ….. [referred to parents and own marriage breakdowns] .What can I say? Wrong time, wrong place. Well, it’s impacted in the degree that I’ve got a dependent out of that marriage, I suppose.”
George, lines: 773-836

George’s was not the only interview which had a break before resumption of taping after a request to start the tape again. This also occurred for Rani, Tom and Ferhat, who were happy to tell the interviewer additional stories after the tape was turned off, indicating that they perceived the tape to be a third-party monitoring the conversation in some way.
None of the issues listed in Table 8.2 included those expected as part of the life cycle such as death of aging parents. For example, although Julie cared for her father after he had an amputation while dealing with her mother’s tumour, both impacted on her ability to function as the parent to two children with health problems and to
continue to undertake part-time work, these disadvantages were not included for this study. If all expected ‘life-events’ had been included, the table and number of instances would have doubled in size.

While in any group of eighteen people it could be expected that some had divorced parents, others had health problems and other life-changing experiences, this seemed a disproportionately large percentage (83%) of people with multiple problems and issues, given that some may not have been articulated at all. The ‘debilitating effects’ of ‘cross group factors’ (Volkoff, 2004, p. 120) was noted in an NCVER report of 2004. Although this report related specifically to students, the multiplicity of disadvantages in the majority of members of this ACE community implied a commonality of disadvantage which could explain the longevity of the connections sustained for support during difficult periods, typified by Maeve, Julie and George.

The commonality of disadvantages also explained why many of the interviewees created connections with an ACE organisation as a replacement for an idealized childhood, because of the non-judgmental milieu of ACE. This was particularly mentioned by Ferhat, George and Ilisapeci, explaining why MAE provided a ‘pseudo-family’ where personal experiences were repeated by most of the interviewees. This family-like connection also accounted in part for the multiplicity of roles noted previously, which were undertaken by participants because it replicated the many relationships which exist in a family—sibling, child/parent, grandchild/parent—and extended family. In other instances, it provided friendship or other forms of support-structures, such as a place for referral or advice.

For some interviewees, who had already experienced impoverishment in childhood, there was a continuing pattern of some form of social or familial hiatus in
their lives after childhood. This held true for Ben, Ferhat, George, Ilisapeci, Gladys, Maeve, Mike, Rani, Steve, May and Julie, all but one (Jules) of the people whose childhoods had been impoverished. For others, childhood had not been difficult but adulthood had brought problems with unemployment, (Jane), divorce and custody (Lee).

### INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES FINDING 2

A hiatus occurred in adulthood for the majority of the interviewees (15) in varying degrees, suggesting that for some, early impoverishment (13) may be linked to life-style and opportunities in later life. For these interviewees there was a tendency to engage in a multitude of roles over a considerable period to create a local support-network which replicated a family.

### 8.3.3 Stories and Catharsis

A recurring action which emerged was the repetition of stories. This often appeared to be linked to catharsis, as many people also told stories about others’ experiences as though needing to create a sense of order in an often chaotic world. Although these stories were sometimes very short snippets of what could have been a much longer tale, others were sufficient to create a small but compact picture of a time, place or situation. Although this was expected from students because of the tradition of self-expressive spoken and written narratives in ACE, it was also true for the teaching and training staff who took part in the interviews.

#### 8.10: Retelling Stories by Staff

“Oh. Look, there was one bloke, one bloke from [place]. Told this story of how his younger brother, this is back in [place] you know, when he was living with his family. His younger brother had written some pretty mild political type letter to one of the newspapers. This was in the days of the [name], I guess. And before they knew it, the secret police were at the door. They dragged the young kid out, hung him from a post outside. And the family wasn’t allowed to touch him till his body had decomposed. And if they had, the same thing would have happened to them.”

Frank, lines: 199-205
“Like I can remember supporting people through child abuse. Things where they, you know, their child abuse issues…. When one of them wanted to report their grandchild being in danger, they had to go though that process.”
Gladys, lines: 910-14

“There’s one organisation that… when people started doing Workplace Training, for example, they said it’s really split this organisation in two. What we do is, the days we do our Workplace Training, you know, we put on our suits, we go out and use one set of language and then we come back and do our community education. And we wear different clothes and we talk in a different way. … And there’s an implicit proclamation that one’s superior to the other, you know.”
Biddy, lines: 448-456

The richness of the oral personal and cultural histories was a constantly recurring theme which was interwoven with short stories or longer narratives in interviews with all categories, ages and cultures of participants. These repetitions affirmed the contention that it was not only the prerogative of the ALBE and language fields (Campbell, 2005) to express the Self through recounting tales, but was a universal phenomenon which could best be aligned to the analytical processes of psychology.

In the ACE sector, as demonstrated through MAE, the forms of story-telling were both written or oral, whether personal or third-party, and often with the cathartic element noted in the previous section, but also repeated as a way of making sense of sometimes shocking difficulties faced in the lives and stories of other participants.

While both Jules and Biddy had been enrolled in other ACE centres and not MAE, Frank was the only interviewee who had never undertaken an ACE course. This could partially be explained because his role at MAE was as the IT technician who also worked full time in mainstream education. Frank’s stated involvement in the centre was for the salary.
Box 8.11: Frank’s Interview

“My wife got involved. And she used to come home and talk about what was going on. I sort of learnt about it from her. I suppose you’d have to say. Well. She needed someone to give her a hand with a bit of the IT. ... My son, my son got involved too. [Told 2 stories of others’ experiences]. Well, I’d say, a lot of the people have been through some pretty heavy or, you know, traumatic sort of life experiences. So they needed a lot of propping up.
Frank, lines: 148-62, 194-5

He often provided a clear contrast to other interviewees because he alone had the perception that ACE was for ‘others’ who had more personal, familial or social needs, yet, at the same time, he displayed typical characteristics of engagement in the sector by having multiple family connections, a 15 year involvement and recounted a number of tales, albeit the stories of others.

Frank’s differences initially appeared to result from his confidence in having a ‘traditional’ education pathway from year 12 and a degree then a Diploma in Education before entering the teaching profession. However, another seven of the participants had all engaged in university education and found employment in teaching, business and community services yet had, at some point, also enrolled in ACE courses, challenging the idea that ACE was not suited to people with a mainstream educational pathway and employment.

The action of story telling, with its complicated and fluctuating aetiology for research, the researcher and the interviewees, remained a constant for all participants. This research is—after all—the story of a particular ACE organisation and its participants.

Whether the story-telling was a preferred means of describing an event and feeling, or a way of eliciting meaning and justification, was less important than its constancy. As a universal means of expression, this repetition of stories and narrated
‘incidents’ seemed to indicate a deeper psychological driver through increasing depths of the human psyche—from individual preconscious and conscious levels—when the tales had personal, demonstrable purposes, through the depths of the personal unconscious to family, racial and eventual universal psychical levels. The stories told and repeated—whether embellished or mythologised—were not only personally relevant, but created bonded communities of individuals and recognition of the homogeneity of the human condition. This was mentioned on a number of occasions (Julie, Rani, Gladys and Ferhat) as being particularly important in a community with such a wide diversity of CALD people of all ages. The actions of story-telling provided a depth to all of the themes discussed by the interviewees as many referred to a story in terms of an issue or theme related to ACE which locked it into one of the four Dimensions.

Every interviewee told stories, either their own, of their families or other students and classes. While the repetition of these narratives continued the practices of writing autobiographical or biographical stories as part of adult learning, their frequency indicated that there was often a cathartic need for making sense of the world, its often unfair events and its random incidents. Recounting, discussing, explaining and gaining uncritical approval continued the tradition of using ACE connections as a form of catharsis or self-analysis either through personal written stories or through oral repetition of life experiences and changes. This form of broader self expression endorsed a number of 10 “multiple metaphors and uses of literacy” (Waterhouse, 2005, p. 17) where, during either the written or oral process, the participants preserved their experiences for later reflection (Waterhouse’s ‘flash freeze’), vented thoughts and emotions to achieve catharsis, and combined a number of other conscious or unconscious aims to make meaning of their life journeys.
Sometimes this was to offer an explanation for their own inadequacies and to gain acceptance or sympathy from their audiences.

All eighteen interviewees told stories which reflected what were often deeply personal events or memories, from brief evocative mentions such as Gladys’s first school day wearing a nightie, through Rani’s reliving of painful memories and Maeve’s more complex expressions of social dislocation. Even those less inclined to recount expansive memories (like Frank and Biddy), re-created snippets evocative of their own family-life or those of others.

Box 8.12: Instances of Waterhouse’s ‘Flash Freeze’ of Stories at MAE.

“My Dad worked in the factory; he worked at Cadbury’s and he worked at the car factory, and as a—oh, he had to work so bloody hard it was not funny. And look, there was never a lot of money at home.”
Gladys, lines: 112-14

“My mother was pregnant at sixteen and gave birth to me at seventeen. She made me feel having me was a big mistake and she did not touch me until she was twenty-one, because I had a rash all over my body—not on the face. My grandmother put olive oil on the rash and I was put outside then covered me in plantain leaves. For five years I couldn’t speak as no-one spoke to me, so I never learned to form words. When I was five they took me to India to a ‘voodoo’ doctor who drilled my throat [showed scars] to get me to speak. I always felt ugly about myself.”
Rani, lines 43-50

“My daughters - I have two daughters and a son. My son has all sorts of problems. He’s had all sorts of problems for years; got a lot of kids [8]. Does a lot of harm I’d say. He complains, uses, he drinks too much, he smokes too much, he takes marijuana too much; he backs too many race horses. He can’t seem to settle down. I think now at this stage of his life he’s completely lost. The daughter’s all right, she can’t have children but, the eldest daughter; she’ll probably be the one that’ll sort of keep us all going. But she’s got a good job and a nice partner. My other daughter though tries very hard, she works all the time, has a little boy, her partner has his own problems and the little boy I think has got a few. He has a few communication problems to say the least. I hope he’ll come all right. He’s being assessed at the moment so let’s hope he’s OK.” [autism]
Maeve, lines: 46-56
INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES FINDING 3

All interviewees repeated personal tales and stories as well as those of others so consistently that there appeared to be a psychological or social reason behind the repetitions, either to make sense of a difficult world or to fulfil a cathartic need to purge events and issues for which the narrator needed to find uncritical social approval.

8.3.4 Transformation

In Table 8.1 (p. 329) four groups of interviewees were identified in relation to the instances of impoverishment and hiatuses in their lives.

For those in the more advantaged group (School-Lovers), any change was minor or simply fulfilled a temporary need in their lives. Biddy’s expertise as an adult educator placed her in the position of initiating or implementing change, not only for individuals, but also in the sector itself. Her sense of connectedness seemed to relate to the notion of learning which was not tied to any location or sector. Interestingly enough, she was willing to work for the reduced salary able to be paid by MAE despite her ability to command much higher amounts in other sectors, indicating her interest in—and a sense of connection with—the ACE sector.

For the second group (School-Likers), this re-connection after a pause or gap in their lives was fully recognised as very meaningful. For example, 58 year-old Jane’s ability to do voluntary work to maintain her Centrelink payments was seen as punitive but also as a means of ‘putting back’. Lee gained entry into a teaching degree after completing the Dip FE which she felt totally changed her life. Neen completed the Certificate II in IT and IV in workplace training before she became an ACE employee. Mike had always done volunteer work and was very aware of
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undertaking community work even before a change of profession and a major health problem changed his direction into ACE.

The largest number in the third group (School-Learners) had a range of comments relating to more abstract perceptions in their lives and the more frequent references to informal learning (family values, social survival and strategies) they had achieved as a parallel to mainstream education. In their later lives they also tended to reinvest their expertise creatively in their communities through their ACE engagements (May and Gladys). Ferhat also commented on joining the committee to help out and felt that gaining an accreditation had ensured a number of his job applications were successful. Ben gained employment after entering MAE as unemployed and reliant on anti-depressants. Rani, however, discussed her years in the ACE sector in terms of a spiritual journey which had taught her humility and she felt was part of God’s plan for her life.

For those people in the last group (School-Loathers) who had been most impoverished in some way in childhood and adulthood, the immediacy and multiplicity of their developmental and more recent disadvantages still tended to outweigh any positive factors in their lives. All commented positively on the nature of learning and its place in re-connecting meaningfully in the community, and all made repeated reference to the changes it had brought to their lives. For Julie, Ilisapeci and George, despite having a multiplicity of disadvantages (major health, unemployment, drugs—either prescribed or not, court cases, lack of settled homes) there was real recognition of changes occurring in their lives and a reconnection with a learning community through their initial ACE connection. George—after a long series of operations, legal complications, divorce and pain-killers—commented repeatedly on how he had joined the MAE committee to assist out of appreciation for
everyone’s support and friendship. Ilsapeci—despite a damaging life on the streets and on heroin and methadone—felt her connection with local ACE organisations and participation in the Dip FE course had given her a second chance at life through tertiary education. Julie, the third of the most disadvantaged, told how being able to complete VCE subjects had overcome her sense of low self-esteem due to having left school in year nine, as she could put VCE units on her resume.

For the other two members of the group—Steve and Maeve—there had been positive changes which were often swamped by the constant repetition of personal, social or familial problems. Maeve started a Certificate IV at the CAE but had to withdraw due to breast cancer. After completing two courses at Certificate IV level Steve was attacked from behind in his security guard job and hospitalised.

**Transformative Learning.** Whether through learning English or literacy, or a VET courses, through mentoring or professional development and other experiences which were of a transformational nature, all interviewees had experienced some form of change after engaging in ACE. It made little difference whether this was related to a learning pathway, employment, enhanced self-esteem, accredited education or directional change.

Although interviewees referred to other forms of transformation in their lives through employment, personal support, relationships and coming off drugs, most references were either directly related to—or aligned with—education and learning. For Ilsapeci (tertiary entry), Lee (tertiary entry), Ben (tertiary entry and employment), Maeve (tertiary entry), Julie (VCE and employment), Steve (tertiary entry), Neen (employment), Ferhat (employment) and Jules (nursing), this was particularly noticeable because of the change of direction which followed the learning. For Gladys, Tom, Mike, Rani and May, the learning (in workplace training
and assessment courses) took the form of additional accreditation which enhanced employment prospects. For Jane and George—and temporarily for Gladys—learning had implications for maintaining their status through Centrelink. Mezirow contended that transformative learning developed autonomous thinking and facilitated an understanding of society and a person’s place within that society and its structures which was clearly demonstrated in those interviewees who often expressed resentment or poor understanding of the systems of academic institutes and government departments such as Centrelink. It added not only meaning to adult education but empowered participants by promoting individuality (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). However, a single form of transformative learning may also occur because of the dissimilarity in learning contexts or the personal and cultural differences in learners and a disparity of teaching styles (Cranton, 1997; Taylor, 1998). Because education was not the only goal of MAE’s interviewees, changes in employment-related learning (such as professional development and internal staff mentoring) meant that paid staff members also experienced transformative learning which was just as effective as that undertaken by traditionally enrolled students.

For Biddy—whose time at MAE was more spasmodic as she had twice worked as a project worker at the centre—her time spent in an ACE creative writing class at DVLC meant she was engaged in learning and connected to her community when she had small children. Although transformative leaning initially seemed too strong a term for her time in ACE as a student, it could also be argued that her direction as a teacher was changed because of that connection, as she subsequently spent many years working in community education and the CAE in many roles.

Again, Frank remained the only interviewee who had not undertaken any form of formal education at MAE and he already possessed the necessary skills to work as
the IT technician. However, he also attended both external and internal training in the administration of the VASS and Nrolls statistical systems which increased his skills and employability in the sector. Based on findings from empirical studies, Taylor (1998) suggested that not all learners or teachers—like Frank—were predisposed to engage in transformative learning, and not all teachers related to the goals of transformative learning. In addition, many adult learning situations—such as Frank’s, for whom RPL would have been more suitable under the vocational education and training system—did not always lend themselves to transformative learning.

Although Mezirow's (1997) contention was that critical reflection was central to transformative learning, other sources have concluded that “critical reflection is granted too much importance in a perspective transformation, a process too rationally driven” (Taylor, 1998, p.33-34). Alternate views of transformative learning as an "intuitive, creative, emotional process" (Grabov, 1997, p. 90) replicated the work of Robert Boyd (Boyd & Myers, 1988), whose theories on transformative education were based on analytical psychology where the cognitive, rational, and objective may be in conflict with the intuitive, imaginative, and subjective (Grabov, 1997).

Having both the objective and subjective playing integral roles in transformative learning suited many ACE courses such as the Dip FE where the learning processes were more balanced. This was because the emphasis on the purely rational was reduced when mentored students were encouraged to connect the rational and the affective through both feelings and emotions in critical reflection as suggested by Taylor (1998), and commented on by Dip FE participants (Ben, Ilisapeci, Maeve and Lee). Because of this emphasis on the connectedness of individuals, the emotion and subjectivity which had often been derided as an
Values that You Hold

additional ‘maternal’ characteristic of ACE, tended to create an intersection of the subjective and objective aspects to create a transformative learning situation.

**INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES FINDING 4**

Whether through the Dip FE or other courses, ACE education seemed to precipitate a positive change which fulfilled the criteria for ‘transformative learning’ as described by Mezirow (1997) and others (such as Grabov, 1997 and Taylor, 1998), and increased a sense of connectedness and self-worth in most participants.

**8.3.5 Change and Connectedness**

While a number of people signalled that they had been transformed in some way through learning, those interviewees reporting the most change in their lives were Ilisapeci, George and Ben, all of whom had acquired tertiary-level qualifications. Although this was often a direct result of the transformative learning, the change incorporated many other aspects of their lives such as confidence, the ability to function in a family-situation and to engage in other social situations.

Ferhat, Steve, Maeve and Julie all spoke repeatedly of considerable changes in their lives, often aligning them to MAE as a further aspect of educational transformation.

Lee, Neen, Jane and Rani each mentioned two instances of personal change which was aligned with—but not restricted to—learning, while Tom, Mike, Gladys, May and Jules each described a single instance of change usually in relation to employment. These changes were different to the transformation mentioned above, although the change often followed the former process.

Those changes people related to ACE, included additional personal factors like support, employment, increased self-esteem and less-reliance on drugs and alcohol.

Ilisapeci’s change from heroin to methadone received personal support and
encouragement as well as practical support such as waiving of fees so that she could continue to overcome her addiction. George had unlimited access to free computer studies, the Internet and printing so that he could undertake court action and continue studies at TAFEs. Ferhat also gained support at MAE during a period of homelessness which he mentioned in his interview, allowing him to make changes to his life in terms of family, employment and relationships.

Because of the range of support they received, fourteen of the total 18 interviewees showed a considerable—or extremely strong—attachment to their local centre for supporting them through periods of personal change.

Table 8.3: Interviewees’ References to Personal Change & Connectedness with ACE

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<th>Change</th>
<th>Local-Location</th>
<th>MAE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.Ben</td>
<td>Qu Te DA Se</td>
<td>Lc Lw Cm Vn Ml</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.Biddy</td>
<td>Lw</td>
<td>St Lg</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.Ferhat</td>
<td>Ed Qu Se</td>
<td>Lc Cm Vn Ml Ls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.Frank</td>
<td>Lc Lw Lv</td>
<td>St Lg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.George</td>
<td>Ed Qu Te Se</td>
<td>Lc Cm Vn Ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.Gladys</td>
<td>Qu</td>
<td>Lc Lw Cm Vn Ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.Iliasepci</td>
<td>Ed Qu Ye DA Se</td>
<td>Lc Lw Cm Vn Ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.Jane</td>
<td>Ed Qu</td>
<td>Lc Cm Vn Ml Ls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.Jules</td>
<td>Ed</td>
<td>Lc Cm Ls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.Julie</td>
<td>Ed Qu Se</td>
<td>Lc Lw Cm Vn Ml Ls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.Lee</td>
<td>Qu Te</td>
<td>Lc Cm Vn Ml</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.Maeve</td>
<td>Ed Qu Te</td>
<td>Lc Lw Cm Vn Ml Ls</td>
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<td>13.May</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.Mike</td>
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<td>15.Neenu</td>
<td>Ed Qu</td>
<td>Lc Lw Cm Vn Ls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.Rani</td>
<td>Qu Si</td>
<td>Vn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.Steve</td>
<td>Ed Qu Te</td>
<td>Lc Cm Ls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.Tom</td>
<td>Qu</td>
<td>Lc Cm Ml Vn Ls</td>
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Key to Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Connectedness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ed: Education (non-acc)</td>
<td>Lc: Local resident</td>
<td>Sp: Received support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qu: Qualifications</td>
<td>Lw: Local employment</td>
<td>St: Provided support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te: Tertiary entry</td>
<td>Cm: Local community</td>
<td>Jc: Joined committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA: Drugs/Alcohol-Less</td>
<td>Vn: Local venues</td>
<td>Vo: Worked as volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Se: Self Esteem</td>
<td>Ml: Moreland or suburbs</td>
<td>Lg: Longevity of connection 5+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si: Spiritual</td>
<td>Ls: Local schools</td>
<td>My: Multiplicity of roles 2+</td>
</tr>
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Table 8.3 demonstrated the number of times people mentioned instances of personal change, their relationships to the local area, plus their connections to MAE itself. Seven people (Ben, Ferhat, George, Ilisapeci, Julie, Maeve and Steve) all had a high incidence of discussing all three factors, suggesting a significant link between change, location and their sense of connection to their local community and MAE.

Although transformation, change and connectedness seemed more important for some interviewees than others, the ultimate aim of the majority of the participants seemed to be related to becoming an integrated part of either their local community or of MAE. Although this took different forms, for every interviewee there were extended discussions on their community, location or a cluster of people which was kith, kin or had a common purpose: for learning, familial, health, social or job-related support. The strength of the association varied between Frank, who stated that he remained somewhat disengaged from MAE as a social society, but maintained longevity of connection, had multiple family-members in MAE and lived locally, to Julie who fulfilled every possible relationship to the organisation.

**Individuation.** Attempting to explain why ACE appeared to satisfy many of the needs of its participants created an initial puzzle. Obviously people who wanted to quickly gain a qualification with status-branding and had no interest in a social or quasi-familial connection would not be likely to apply to their local ACE centre—unless because of its convenience and low costs. Often poorly resourced, in small venues with few support-staff, with tight government limitations on levels of delivery and priority target groups, there were few inducements to enrol. The people who became long-term associates appeared to be satisfying some need which included lifelong learning but also went well beyond education. Carl Jung’s theory of individuation may provide one of the reasons which explained the success of ACE,
and how it had been perpetuated despite erratic funding, minimal status and poor marketing.

Jung believed most individuals had lost touch with important parts of our Self and that the reintegration of those lost aspects were the goal of life which could be achieved through: interpreting dreams or imagination, integrating both the syzygy of male and female aspects of the self (anima and animus) and resolving the oppositions of attitude and function types. He called this process ‘individuation’ or the process of coming to know all the parts of oneself and learning to give them harmonious expression.

Given the multiple facets of ACE, it appeared likely that by satisfying many of the needs, wants and connections of each of the people in communities such as MAE, the sector had locked into part of the process of individuation for its participants (Appendix 1:O). This was achieved by accepting people into a centre and supporting them through and beyond part of their life-journeys toward the individuation process.

**INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES FINDING 5**

Although people became part of MAE to change their lives for reasons primarily related to education and learning, there was often a deeper psychological factor which seemed to drive participants to engage in the sector in a multiplicity of roles to ensure longevity of connection which was maintained well beyond expectations.

### 8.3.6 A Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework was analytically induced from five key factors in relation to the people who used MAE. This conceptual framework (Figure 8.1, p. 348), was induced from the “third level conceptual perspective analysis” (Glaser, 1998, p.136) using the findings to create propositions from the data supplied by the interviewees.
Figure 8.1. Conceptual framework induced from analysing the individuals’ data.

While induced from an analysis of the data, the framework above also attempted to demonstrate the causal links between the phenomena identified in the interviewees’ lives, and their engagement in ACE. The single lines are used—largely
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as a reminder—to link a group of people with a particular life-influence. Double lines indicated a degree of equivalence, for example, where strong negative childhood experiences existed there was an impoverishment of some kind, while change and learning led to an attitudinal transformation or life experience.

The arrows suggested links between the lived-experiences and actions of the groups of individuals and stages of a developmental process through which they engaged or disengaged according to needs and life-stages. This created a structure which encapsulated the life-influences driving people into ACE and those which engaged and created bonds as part of a process which was both educative and psychologically restorative or transformational for the participants.

This framework was an emerging theory which was constructed using the constant comparative method and meaning generation tactics suggested by Corbin and Strauss’s (1990, p.7) adaptation of Glaser and Strauss’s original 1967 ‘concepts, categories and hypotheses’ (p. 140) to propositions.

The first of the five key concepts identified was the disadvantages of childhood which resulted from some kind of impoverishment of support, finances and educational opportunities—this could also have taken the form of family violence, drunkenness and poor health or family disintegration due to death or separation. These factors were most heavily identified in interviews with Ilisapeci, George, Maeve, Steve and Julie. Others such as Ben and Rani described health disabilities and second language difficulties while Jules and Mike had family deaths to deal with as children, and others had family break-down and or violence (Ferhat, Ilisapeci, May, Jules, Steve and George).

Secondly, there were those hiatuses or traumatic events which intruded into the adult years, such as accidents, unemployment, drugs and alcohol, divorce,
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violence and health breakdown. Again these were most prevalent in interviewees such as Maeve (breast cancer), George (industrial accident), Lee, Maeve, Julie and May (family breakdown), Ilisapeci (drug addiction) and Steve (car accident).

Thirdly, for interviewees was the relief many experienced through cathartic story-telling, group discussion and even the interviews themselves. All interviewees engaged in some form of repetition of either their own stories (Julie, Ferhat and Jules) or longer narratives in the third person (Frank and Rani).

Fourthly, was that some kind of transformation was often involved through education and gaining a qualification (Tom, Lee, Steve, Gladys and May), change through employment (Biddy, Neen, Frank, Rani, Mike and Julie) or from receiving support—which may have included both of the previous categories—(Ilisapeci, Maeve, George, Jane, Ferhat, Ben and Jules).

Finally, there was the connectedness which meant identification with a community—either specifically in a location (such as a local government area and its facilities) or a venue such as MAE. This factor also included the defining myths and tales which created that community, forming a sense of connectedness which was demonstrated to a greater or lesser degree by the majority of the interviewees, and may have substituted for the approval people expected from a family.

These five key conceptual categories created the framework above which completed a possible pathway along which ACE participants could move, entering and exiting at any point depending on their needs and goals. For the eighteen interviewees, their active engagement at each stage was based on the recurring themes which each discussed, with consideration of the actions of cathartic story-telling and demonstrations of connectedness which each exhibited.
INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES FINDING 6
PROPOSITION
(Analytically Induced Emerging Theory of a Conceptual Framework)

People engaged and re-engaged in the MAE community as they wanted depending on their needs and for as long a period of engagement as they required to fulfil their goals. The proposition of a framework emerged with five conceptual categories by which participants could travel through ACE as part of their lifelong educational, employment and psychological journeys.

8.4 Concluding Comment

Chapter 8 drew together the data researched from three areas: the sector of ACE, the organisation of MAE and the people who were respondents to the survey and/or participants of the interviews. The results of this process resulted in four sectoral, three organisational and six personal findings, from the last one of which a conceptual framework was generated.

There were a number of recurring factors in all of the findings and propositions which related to the multiplicity of roles and longevity of connection providing corroboration of the implicit theory generated as part of the conceptual framework. Some form of desire for connectedness was also apparent at all levels, reaffirming the contentions of a number of ACE researchers (Crombie, 1998; Golding, Davies, & Volkoff, 2001). There was a strong factor related to psychological healing which explained why people engaged in ACE as part of integration of the psyche in the process of individuation.

The categories of Impoverishment, Hiatus, Catharsis, Transformation and Connectedness created an emerging framework which proposed a theory for people’s continued connection with an ACE sector. They could engage and disengage at any point according to need. These five conceptual categories proposed a cycle of
learning, healing, and personal development which addressed the needs of its constituency and, for those not needing these stages, a place for gaining educational qualifications or employment.

The results of analysing all of the combined data depicted a sector with little educational credibility, reducing government funding and few opportunities to become self-sustaining. It depicted one organisation which was not coping well with both the pressures to change and its internal fight to maintain its own vision and purposes. For the people involved, although connected through their involvement in a community which offered them personal, familial and social support and education, they were feeling resentful of bureaucratic ‘top down’ demands to change an organisation which was demonstrably developed by the community itself as part of a bottom-up process.
9. CONCLUSION

“I’d like to see it change back more to a more user friendly sort of people you know; so people could feel less intimidated. Because sometimes people get intimidated easily. And the people we used to have, and I’m going back to the classes where we had young men from work and boys and everybody. They were there for a - well I think they would be more intimidated by some of the situations now, you know.” Maeve

Having examined the organisation which became MAE in Chapters 4 and 5, and incorporated the introductory survey results with the data gained from the eighteen key informants in Chapters 6 and 7, this concluding chapter recapitulates those results, and discusses the implications of the findings presented in Chapter 8. These findings and the proposition which emerged as a conceptual framework were examined within the context of the original guiding research questions: ‘Is ACE becoming TAFE?’ and ‘Who uses ACE and Why?’ They also addressed the frequent additional questions which tended to surface concerning the nature of ACE organisations.

This concluding chapter documents a number of points. First, it reiterates the contention that the research is original. In order to reaffirm its authenticity within educational discourse and to recognise any prior or existing knowledge and theory, the propositions are placed within the context of existing literature which comprised the literature review. Secondly, it offers a short explanation of the problems which occurred and any limitations which resulted. Thirdly, it then considers the propositions and—although not intended as an evaluation—concludes with recommendations and some subjective reflections which resulted from the years of research.
9.1 Originality

Other valuable research on ACE—such as completed by Campbell (2005), Sanguinetti (1994) and Clemens (2003)—did not consider the stakeholders to be a single, integrated community but possibly antithetical groups which may rarely have shared common goals and interests. Some Australian examples which were also considered as part of the pre-reading for this research included Clemens (2003) on ‘participants’ (read students), Sanguinetti (1994, 1998 and 1999) whose main focus was staff through the pedagogical impact of the introduction of the Victorian CGEA, and Bradshaw’s (1997) conceptual framework for adult education which legitimised and created a curriculum framework which gave the sector credibility for the first time. Reports and writing on social capital by Golding et al (2001), the pathways planning completed by Teese (1997), and reports by Schofield (1996), and Volkoff (2004), all combined to help provide the context for the study.

Researching the MAE case study through the respondents and interviewees who created an image of a local community fulfilled Praetz’s (1997) statement about the need for ACE to be researched from inside—which was one of the statements which originally suggested the notion of participant research.

Because of the heterogeneous nature of the aetiology of ACE organisations, the study of MAE and its participants as an integrated, horizontal community—as suggested by Heimstra (2002, 2003)—emphasised its importance to its constituents for the 24 years since its inception. However, it also reflected the tenuous grasp ACE organisations—such as this one—had on their sustainable existence, when despite constant praise for their ability to address community needs, be flexible and create social capital, they were increasingly being drained of funding.
Caught between applause for achieving the current—and shifting—government priority target groups who were concession-card holders and unable to pay fees, and being told to become self-supporting, many organisations such as MAE felt pressured beyond reasonable expectations, some even closing down.

There were very distinct parallels between the ACE sector and nursing, kindergarten teaching and other traditionally predominantly female professions where there was rhetoric about vocations, accreditation and qualifications without the funding to support the movements or salaries commensurate with the level of expertise. The nurturing expectations of the work and the convenience of shorter hours for family carers were expected to compensate for the low salary-rate, lack of funding for resources, infrastructure and no career pathways.

9.2 Problems Encountered

One of the main problems encountered was an ethical one. Because a number of interviewees regretted telling stories about violence and incest, in two instances the tape was rewound to delete the sections. Two other interviewees requested materials be deleted which effectively reduced the impact of some contentions, especially in Chapter 7 which dealt with personal issues. Some interviewees expressed concerns that someone might manage to ‘work out’ who they were and the comments would rebound on them, which led to some deletions. In every case, such comments and surrounding dialogue were removed—but with regret as they often raised issues which were applicable to other people and situations.

Originally planned to be twenty interviewees, the eventual withdrawal of two was after a long process of discussions, appointments and postponements. One of the final eighteen was ‘interviewed’ by a series of emails which, however, did not seem as detailed as the personal interviews and certainly missed any emotional overtones.
The eighteenth gave a partial interview which was to avoid re-experiencing negative emotions. In the cases of these two people, the interviews lacked some details and relied on the objective data supplied without any sense of the subjectivity and emotion other interviewees displayed.

One unexpected problem which arose was that external academic and educational personnel gave little credence to research of what was perceived as a pseudo—or quasi—educational sector. Despite MAE being a nationally registered, accredited RTO this was rarely acknowledged as giving the organisation legitimacy, both by people within the sector and those in other educational sectors such as TAFEs.

**Box 9.1: Ben on ACE**

“I think through RMIT’s eyes and I think probably through a lot of large TAFEs is that ACE is seen like, as the bottom of the barrel education.”

Ben, lines: 672-678

Having to make explanations about the research to people in mainstream education often meant becoming an apologist for the sector. The same held true for people actually engaged in the sector who often remarked that although they felt part of it, and engaged in MAE for long periods in many roles, it wasn’t like a ‘real school’. This continual necessity to justify the research and convince people it was about an authentic educational organisation exposed one of the main weakness of the sector, that is, its lack of recognition which had not changed since it had been invited to ‘come in, Cinderella’.

**9.3 Synopsis of Research**

The descriptive comparison of the early years of MAE as a literacy organisation was intended to demonstrate not only the bottom-up development of a community organisation which had a primary focus on education, but also to gauge the major
differences which had occurred during the pre-1994 and 1994 to 2004 periods. This historical educational research intended recording the past of the organisation, as there appeared to be no such research carried out in ACE organisations in the northern region, except through celebratory magazines, annual reports, booklets of student writing and curriculum or training manuals.

The use of informants in the forms of survey questionnaire respondents and the interviewees was intended to personalise the work and to give a voice to the participants of ACE. Such an opportunity to engage in self-expression to an audience other than MAE participants rarely occurs because of the fragmented nature of the sector, and because research was usually conducted—as Praetz (1997) contended—by academics and not practitioners. Research was also usually related to a specific group or perspective, such as students, volunteers or teachers, or evaluating pedagogical practices, and not to the whole community.

The people involved in the research also contributed a distinctly different perspective through relating their own stories, creating integration of an extremely diverse group who were able to connect creatively with each other and engage on multiple levels for many reasons. The parts of stories used in this research only succeeded in demonstrating aspects of the full interviews, leaving a great deal of rich material which may be used in other, follow-up research.

The guiding question ‘Is ACE becoming TAFE?’ was answered as both yes and no; yes because of the pressure on the sector to implement compliant business systems plus to deliver accredited courses. It also deserved a negative reply because of resistance to those changes, the reduction to funding and ACE being limited to delivering courses up to AQF 2 to below year-12 students. ‘Who uses TAFE and Why?’ can best be answered in terms of people feeling the need to engage in the
sector for familial, educational, social and economic reasons, but also because they were keen to engage in their local community and make changes in their lives. They moved in and out of the sector according to their needs, sometimes engaging for prolonged periods and creating a personal connection.

The outcomes of the study moved beyond what was expected to be a descriptive analysis of an ACE organisation and its participants when it began—through a process of constant comparative methods, to generate meaning and a conceptual framework.

Although the findings in each of the categories of sectoral, organisational and personal provided the answers to the original guiding questions, a group of conceptual categories emerged from which a set of propositions combined to create a framework. The induced framework proposed that there was a causal relationship between life-experiences in both childhood and adulthood appropriate to a high number of MAE participants, who engaged in cathartic actions such as story-telling as part of an educational and psychologically transformational process to become connected to a community.

**9.4 Predicting Outcomes**

The continued diminishing of organisations and lack of recognition of ACE centres as thriving educational communities with commonalities of values and characteristics may have tripartite results. Firstly, without the infrastructure and resources to support them, centres—such as Eltham Adult Education, Northcote Library Education and Brunswick Community Education Project which no longer exist—will continue to close. Although their constituents may find an alternate means of connecting with their local community, it diminishes access to lifelong learning for people with limited access to travel, funds and mobility. Secondly,
pressures to replicate the business and educational aspects of mainstream sectors may cause a continued loss of volunteers and community members of committees, leaving centres such as MAE to choose between being taken over by another organisation or reduce community input in favour of commercial goals. Thirdly, the external/exoteric pressures to become a business and the internal/esoteric resistance to that change by the stakeholders will cause the organisation—and possibly other similar centres—to explode or implode.

9.5 Recommendations for ACE

Internally, as was suggested by interviewees Gladys, Rani and Biddy, participants in ACE centres need to become decisive about their goals, rejecting elements which do not fulfil their mission/purpose statements and aims, even if this results in running unaccredited courses, in rejecting Competency Based Training as unworkable and creating new, truly sustainable ways of existing. Conversely, by undertaking a commitment to becoming a viable business conducted by a Board and committing to fee-for-service courses to supplement their income, an organisation could choose to alter their aims and goals to compete successfully in a competitive marketplace.

Externally, research needs to be funded to evaluate the real cost of an ACE organisation, and a commitment made to ensuring its viability through provision of save and low-cost venues, and sufficient funding to ensure that ACE centres with a commitment to delivering TAFE-level education have the support, equipment and resources to succeed.
9.6 Recommendations for Further Research

Given that this research concentrated on one organisational case study and a group of its people through interviews, additional questions for further research can be raised. Is the situation at MAE and in the northern suburbs of Melbourne common to other Victorian ACE centres? Are they only pertinent to metropolitan and not rural areas? Are organisations that have embraced a corporate business model thriving and have they become sustainable concerns? Have they traded their values in order to become sustainable? Although the respondents’ details indicated that longevity of connection existed in similar northern metropolitan centres, is it a characteristic of the sector or some defining quality for organisations which have shared networks and developmental origins?

Is the multiplicity of roles which characterised MAE prevalent in other centres? Or is it a part of MAE’s culture based on lifelong earning and homogeneity of interests created by the stakeholders’ perceptions of self-defined working class origins?

A recurring question which was not specifically addressed in the research concerned the value of an ACE organisation to its local community, although interviewees were quite vocal about the value to themselves and other participants.

9.7 Subjective Reflections

While this work was originally intended as a research document written from a totally objective perspective in part to refute the often quoted contention that ACE is ‘warm and fuzzy’, on a personal level, it meant a long and complex journey as a researcher. Being part of ACE is to wear one’s heart on one’s sleeve because of the intimacy which invariable results from a long-term connection with a program. This
is not to say that the sector is not effective and efficient as a means of educating and training adults. On the contrary, many adults find they are able to succeed because of the qualities which differentiate ACE from the other sectors: the adaptability to different learning styles and personal needs, the personal support and encouragement available at all levels of the organisation, plus the empowering ability to engage in the management of a centre. However, as a researcher, I emerged from the years of study with a deeper appreciation of the sector, an enormous reverence for the trials and tribulations against which people struggle to succeed, and a deep sense of despair due to the slow strangulation of cash-strapped programs and what their disappearance may mean to their local communities.

This journey was also personally revelatory as the interactions through semi-structured interviews and resulting introspection confirmed that I, the researcher, was completely typical of the people who use ACE. This was because of the longevity of my connection (nearly 20 years), multiplicity of roles (volunteer, committee member, sessional teacher, manager and student) and engagement after periods of personal hiatuses.

To continue the spirit of story-telling, which unfortunately this work only touched briefly, I will tell the story which has kept this researcher working in the sector. Although only one of hundreds which would fulfil the same purpose, Jodie’s story demonstrates what makes ACE different and why it needs to be funded, encouraged and appreciated.
Box 9.2: I Retell Jodie’s Story

A young woman called Jodie came to my literacy class one evening and told a story of why she left school at 14 years old. The teachers had told her mother that they were puzzled as to why Jodie couldn’t learn when she seemed so intelligent. Until she enrolled in ACE, she couldn’t write more than her own name and had struggled with all of those problems which sometimes diminish the life of someone struggling with literacy—entering the men’s toilets, having bank tellers fill out withdrawal slips and getting off trains at the wrong station when they missed a stop.

Jodie had 3 months of one-to-one tuition so that she could learn to read and write personal details and learn some functional literacy. Because she could only attend classes in the evenings, she was put in a small mixed group where she sat like a frozen rabbit, taking weeks to become comfortable with her mixed-sex classmates although her reading and writing grew in leaps and bounds.

One evening she started talking and couldn’t seem to stop, telling us that she didn’t learn at school because between the ages of 5 and 13 years, every night after school her high-school aged brothers who were meant to be looking after her, took turns to hold her down and rape her. At school all she could think of was the nightmare of what would happen to her that night.

She had tried to tell her mother who wouldn’t listen, and learnt to submit and stop fighting to prevent being hurt or torn. Pregnant at 13, her mother rejected her and she went on the streets to support herself and the baby.

She had never been able to tell anyone previously but it all emerged in class because she felt so comfortable by then having heard many other tragic tales, and she knew nobody would judge her. I organised professional counselling for her and she quickly progressed to a Basic Education class where she began to write her stories, eventually becoming a volunteer and supporting other students learning to write, or advising women with similar stories to her own.

When her mother died, the class encouraged her to go to the funeral for closure, planned her clothing and arranged her transport as a class activity. Two of men in the group drove her to the funeral and everyone in class cheered when she recounted her story of the three of them standing across the grave staring at her brothers defiantly.

Eventually Jodie married and had second child. After she moved to another suburb, she joined the committee of management of the local ACE centre where she also kept up her volunteer tutoring work, often checking in at MAE by email. She is very proud that she has the confidence and ability to ‘put back’ into an ACE community.

She jokes that she will never write War and Peace, but passed VCE English and can help her children with their homework, has a job and enjoys reading a Mills and Boon.
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APPENDIX 1
and
APPENDIX 2 (CD-ROM)

The Values that You Hold

Encountering Change in an Adult Community Education Program in Victoria

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School of Education
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University)
Victoria, Australia

October, 2006
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Note: 3 above Excel spreadsheets in 013AppendixXLS

APPENDIX 2

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Appendix 1A

Hi. My name is Meg Curlewis. I am sending you this brief survey as part of my study for a PH D at RMIT. I probably already know you through a connection with Adult Community Education (ACE) as I work for Moreland Adult Education. I would really appreciate it if you would fill out this survey and return it in the stamped self-addressed envelope provided. Any additional comments would be most welcome.

Name(optional): _______________________________________________________

1. **What is your connection with ACE?**  *(Circle 1 or more)*  
   Student  Paid Staff  Volunteer  Committee  Other  _____________

2. **How many years have you been involved in ACE?**  *(Circle)*  
   1-3  4-6  7-10  10-15  15-20  20+

3. **Do you think ACE has changed since your first involvement?**  *(Circle) YES  NO*  
   If Yes, how?

   __________________________  ________________________________________
   __________________________  ________________________________________
   __________________________  ________________________________________

4. **If it has changed, is it for the better or worse?**  *(Circle a number)*  
   Worse  Better
   1  2  3  4  5

5. **Do you feel positive (+) or negative (-) about the following?** *(Answer any)*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>These may be of more interest to paid</th>
<th>These may be of more interest to students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff qualifications</td>
<td>Type of Courses You Can Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation/Certificates</td>
<td>Changing teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Packages</td>
<td>Getting Certificates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student profile changes</td>
<td>Using computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology and online</td>
<td>Fees and charges for courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business/Strategic Planning</td>
<td>Cost of materials/photocopied sheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation/records</td>
<td>Size of classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels of pay</td>
<td>Information for Students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I will also be doing some half-hour interviews. Would you be interested in taking part in one? Please tick if yes. □ Interview

Thank you for your time,

Meg
Interviews
Meg’s Study

• Lots of you have talked to me about my studies and said you would like to be included. If you still like the idea, give me ring and we can talk about it.

• Remember that you won’t be identified. You can use another name or a number.

• You can change your mind at any time and we will wipe the tape or take out the bits you want removed.

• Questions will be about your schooling, education and the things you think have had a negative effect on your learning. Other questions will be about your time in ACE or the TAFE.

😊😊😊

We will meet in the library, or in one of Meg’s Coburg offices.

Tear off one of the slips below and get in touch on one of the contact numbers
ACE QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear ________________________________,

Thank you for agreeing to fill out this questionnaire. There are no right or wrong answers. As part of my research, I am asking if Adult Community Education (ACE) has changed in the last 10-12 years. After trying to establish if it has changed at all, I want to establish how much and in what way. Although I can quote statistics about ACE, people’s opinions are what I need from this questionnaire, so please make any comments at all.

1. Have you been associated with the ACE sector for (please circle):
   1-3 years          4-6 years          7-10 years          11-15 years          15+ years

2. How would describe your role/s within ACE? (please list all roles eg paid teacher/ manager/ volunteer/student/committee/regional personnel/worker in ACE venue/ librarian/ admin/project worker over the whole period of your association with ACE)

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

3. In the years you have been associated with ACE in any capacity, do you think the sector has changed? (please circle): Yes   No
   If Yes, describe how you think the sector has changed in general? (please add extra sheets if necessary)
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
4. What are the three biggest changes you personally have seen in the ACE sector?

A.

B.

C.

5. Some influential factors have included the following 10.
Please number these from 1-10 in the order you think they have impacted on ACE (1 having the most impact, 10 having least).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Australian Quality Training Framework</th>
<th>Australian Qualifications Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificates: CGEA/CSWE/CELL/etc</td>
<td>Conceptual Framework of Further Education (Bradshaw)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Packages e.g. vocational</td>
<td>GST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificates 2,3 &amp; 4 and Diplomas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong Learning</td>
<td>Youth in ACE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Pathways (including Diploma in Further Ed or Liberal Arts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online delivery</td>
<td>Kirby Report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you feel strongly about other influences which may have impacted on ACE please add them here. Positive influence (+)   Negative influence (-)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other…………………………………</th>
<th>Other…………………………………</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other…………………………………</td>
<td>Other…………………………………</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Looking back over the time since you became involved in ACE in any capacity, what features did you find positive?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

7. Have these features changed at all? In your opinion, for the better or worse?

_________________________________________________________________
8. If you agreed that there had been changes to the sector (ie Yes to Q 3) how do you think changes have impacted on the following stakeholders?

Students

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

Teaching/Training staff

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

Managers/Co-ordinators

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

Committees of Management & Volunteers
9. Can you name 3 attributes which make the ACE sector different to the other more mainstream educational sectors (primary, secondary, TAFE and Universities)

1. 

2. 

3. 

10. Can you name 3 ways ACE differs from the TAFE sector?

1. 
2. __________________________________________________________

3. __________________________________________________________

11. In your opinion, is ACE becoming more, or less, like the TAFE sector? (circle)
    Less
    1  2  3  4  5
    More

12. What problems do you see ahead if ACE is to remain a functioning sector?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

(Please attach any other comments you would like to make)

Thank you very much for assisting my research,

Meg

Appendix 1D
RECORD SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Name: ____________________________________________________________________

Address: ____________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________   Postcode: _____________

Contacts:   Phone (h) ________________ (w) ________________ (m) ________________

Email ____________________________________

Age: ___________________            Employment: ________________________

Country of Birth: ___________________________ First Language: _________________

Disability/Health etc: ___________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Involvement in ACE:

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Ethics letter

Signed permission form

Survey

Questionnaire

Interview

Tape

Transcribed

Thank you

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Appendix 1E
RMIT HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Prescribed Consent Form For Persons Participating In Research Projects Involving Interviews, Questionnaires or Disclosure of Personal Information

FACULTY OF Education, Language and Community Services
DEPARTMENT OF Industry, Professional and Adult Education

Name of participant: ________________________________
Project Title: “The Values that You Hold”

Name(s) of investigators: (1) Margaret (Meg) Curlewis
(2) ________________________________ Phone: ________________________________

1. I have received a statement explaining the interview/questionnaire involved in this project.
2. I consent to participate in the above project, the particulars of which - including details of the interviews or questionnaires - have been explained to me.
3. I authorise the investigator or his or her assistant to interview me or administer a questionnaire.
4. I acknowledge that:
   (a) Having read Plain Language Statement, I agree to the general purpose, methods and demands of the study.
   (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
   (c) The project is for the purpose of research and/or teaching. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
   (d) The confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded. However should information of a confidential nature need to be disclosed for moral, clinical or legal reasons, I will be given an opportunity to negotiate the terms of this disclosure.
   (e) The security of the research data is assured during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to my interviewer’s supervisor, Jack Keating, the chairperson of Moreland Adult Education and RMIT University. Any information which will identify me will not be used.
   (f) I give my consent to be audio-taped during interviews.

Participant’s Consent

Name: ________________________________ Date: ________________________________
( Participant)

Name: ________________________________ Date: ________________________________
(Witness to signature)

Where participant is under 18 years of age:

I consent to the participation of ________________________________ in the above project.

Signature: (1) ________________________________ (2) ________________________________ Date: ________________________________
(Signatures of parents or guardians)

Names: ________________________________ (Witness to signature) Date: ________________________________

Participants should be given a photocopy of this consent form after it has been signed.

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, University Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001. The telephone number is (03) 9925 1745.
Dear _____________________,

My name is Margaret (Meg) Curlewis, and I am studying at RMIT University. As part of my study, I would like to include interviews with people who have been students, staff or involved in some other way in adult education.

This study is being undertaken as part of a Doctor of Philosophy Degree being completed for the Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services in the Department of Industry, Professional and Adult Education at RMIT University.

My research is called “The Values that You Hold”. It is about the Victorian adult community education (ACE) sector, in particular about the changes to smaller providers over the last few years, and the pressures which have caused those changes.

I would like to include the experiences of people involved by conducting and audio-taping some informal interviews. I have attached a list of the kind of questions I will be asking and would be very pleased if you would agree to be interviewed, but willingness to take part is purely voluntary.

Interviews will be from half to one hour, but can be shortened, taking place in the adult education rooms at Coburg Library, but we could meet elsewhere if you prefer. All interviews will be confidential. You can change your mind about being interviewed or ask to have the tape returned at any time, otherwise, the recordings will remain locked up and then destroyed within 5 years.

If you agree to be interviewed, I would appreciate it if you would sign the attached consent form and return it to me in the stamped, self addressed envelope provided. For further information ring me on [work number] or [home number] or contact my supervisor, Shane Muldoon, nap@netsol.net.au.

Yours sincerely,

Meg Curlewis, B.A.(Hons), M.A.

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, University Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001.

Appendix 1F
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. If you would like to stop the interview at any time, just press the button or signal. You can ask me questions at any time or choose not to reply. You can change your mind at any time about your answers being used, and I will return the tape to you. The interview will be written out for you to check and I will remove anything you choose.

Remember when I say ‘ACE’ I mean adult community education places (like Moreland Adult Ed).

All

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself, like where you were born and about your family?
   - What do you think helped make you the person you are now? (things like your personality or experiences)
   - How did you feel growing up?

2. Can you describe your early years of school? (secondary? tertiary?)
   - How would you describe your feelings about your schooling years?

3. Where or how did you find out about ACE?

4. Why did you get involved in ACE?

5. How would you have described ACE when you first became involved?
   - Was it the same or different to other types of schooling?

6. How would you describe it now?

7. Do you see any differences between ACE when you started and now?

8. If yes, what are they?
   - Please tell me as many as you can think of.
   - Would you say it is better or worse?
   - How do you mean? Or why?

9. How would you describe a TAFE to someone new to adult education?

10. And how would you describe ACE?

11. What do you think makes them similar or different?

12. What do you like about ACE?

13. What don’t you like?

14. Can you see a need for ACE in the future?
15. Do you have any ideas on what ACE could be doing to become better?

Students

16. What have you studied in ACE?

17. Why did you choose ACE and not TAFE?

18. Do you think the courses now are different or the same as when you started to study in ACE?

19. Can you see any other changes happening in ACE?

20. If you have gone on to a TAFE or University as well as ACE, are there differences?

21. Why do you think people go to ACE centres?

Volunteers/Committee

22. For how long have you done volunteer/committee work in ACE?

23. Why did you get involved?

24. What kind of activities have you done?

25. Do you think ACE has changed for volunteers since you started? (If YES or NO)
   • In what way/s?

26. Why do you think other people come to ACE as volunteers?
   • Do you think they get what they want/need from volunteering?

Staff

27. Why do (did) you work for ACE?

28. Have you ever worked in a TAFE or University? IF YES
   • What are the main differences?

29. What would you say have been the biggest influences on the ACE sector since you started?

30. In your opinion, is ACE under any pressure to change? If YES
   • Where is the pressure coming from and is it succeeding?

31. Can you suggest any ideas for improving ACE?

IT
32. Can you describe what IT was available when you started in ACE?
   • People, Courses, Equipment?

33. How would you describe the IT now?

34. What do you think are the main differences (between then and now)?

35. What would you say are the main differences between the IT available in mainstream education and ACE?

36. Has this changed at all since you have been involved?
   LearnLinks

37. What is your position in relation to Learnlinks?

38. How did you get involved in the project?

39. Have you found it a positive or negative experience?
   • Why?

40. What effect do you think the project has had on ACE?

41. Do you think it has made ACE more or less like the RMIT-TAFE?

42. Why do you think LearnLinks has—or hasn't—a future?

43. Would you like to talk about it further?

Dip F Ed

44. How are/were you involved in Diploma of Further Education?

45. How did you find out about it?

46. Is the course different or the same as any other you have done in ACE?
   • Why—or how?

47. Do you think the course is more like an ACE course or a TAFE course?
   • In what ways?

48. Do you think the course has a future?

49. If you could change the course, how would you do it?

50. Is there anything extra you would like to say about the course?

Appendix 1G
Retelling the 18 Biographical Tales of the Interviewees

The following eighteen key informants had a wonderfully diverse lot of stories to tell and experiences which they generously shared. Many were worth a full, intensive case study in themselves so a great detail of fascinating life experience has not been included. However, the following ‘ACE stories’ give a clear indication of the richness and variety of human experiences which are usually discussed in ACE centres and form the basis of the opinions, values and ideas which are included in each story. These biographies have been included because—despite only two interview questions asking for personal details—up to half of each interview session became a means of self-expression which repeated, in oral form, the earlier repetition of personal experience which was in the organisation’s publications.

Rani

Rani was born in Malaysia over sixty years ago. Her father was originally from India, and her mother of mixed Thai-Indian heritage. There was a 22 year difference in age between them when they married, and Rani was their first child, born when her mother turned 17 years. Because Rani’s tiny body was covered with eczema, her mother did not touch her for five years although her grandmother smeared her body with olive oil and covered her with plantain leaves before giving her sun-baths to treat her skin.

As she did not speak due to minimal contact with people, Rani’s father took her to India where a ‘doctor’ drilled a hole in her throat to make her talk—she still has the scars. Despite this beginning, Rani was little a princess in her family as she had no siblings until she was eight year old when her parents quickly had another eight children. Due to this age difference, she felt she was not initially close to her siblings.
Because her father believed an Indian education was superior to any she could receive in Malaysia, he paid for Rani to be flown to and from an exclusive boarding school—the Hill Station school—in India three times a year. Her home language was Tegalu, but she had to learn to speak Tamil for her education, and then English—three totally different scripts. Her father wanted her to speak Tamil—southern Indian language. After her secondary boarding school, she went to Madras University, where she won the Oratory prize three years in a row. After the presentation ceremony, her father—who was always her support-person—held her in his arms and cried with joy because she was “his child who was never going to speak”.

Rani completed a degree in literature then a Masters degree in New Zealand, returned to Malaysia and lectured at Penang University before returning to New Zealand to complete teacher training. She was teaching in Fiji but decided to emigrate with her husband during the coup because they wanted a peaceful life for their two children. She found it very difficult at first as in Fiji she had a very high status as a professional and was quite alienated by the Australian culture and way of life. Eventually, she decided that the move was beneficial for her as Australia taught her humility—which she interprets as part of her personal journey toward spiritual development.

Rani’s ACE connection began indirectly. Despite being highly qualified when she came to Australia, she was initially unable to find employment. She met a male counselor whose wife was co-ordinator of a neighbourhood house, who advised her to apply to a community centre. She was employed to teach ESL not only because of her qualifications, but also because of understanding of the experiences of migration. As her own father felt very threatened by English and would not learn it, she could relate strongly to the needs
and psychological factors facing adults needing to learn the language. She also taught at a second ACE centre where—because of her lack of post-graduate TESOL qualifications—they expected her to teach cookery—which she found to be very humbling because of her qualifications.

Rani expressed a number of personal core values relating to her own spirituality which she believed has been enhanced by her work in ACE. On a number of occasions during her interview, she referred to her personal quest for inner peace, relating it to a growth in understanding of diversity and the difficulties people face and conquer in their lives, which she had encountered during her years as teacher in ACE.

Rani has been offered work in TAFEs and at AMES but choose to work in ACE as she believes it provides what her students want and need, which goes well beyond the delivery of education. However, she believed that the sector has undergone enormous change since her first involvement, primarily through the administrative pressure for an unrealistic amount of paperwork and overwhelming work involved in AQTF and other audit compliance which was placed on organizations. For her beginning-level language students, she believed that the constant demands to accredit training are creating an atmosphere of pressure and anxiety which they do not need.

**Julie**

Julie was a fifty-plus English-speaker who had been involved in ACE for over ten years as student, committee member and administrative worker. She was born in a migrant hostel to English parents who moved to Brunswick when she was small. Julie went to a parish primary school and a local, all-girls Catholic high school until aged 14 years (year 9 level) but felt the nuns always favoured the girls who played sports well or whose parents
had money and could help out at the school. She did not enjoy her secondary schooling at all, due to long periods of chronic health problems which meant she was always behind with her schoolwork.

She was given permission to leave schooling at 14 years, and went to the Evelyn Ashby business college in Block Arcade (in the centre of the Melbourne central business district) for a year to learn book-keeping and other office skills. She spend a lot of time with her mother as her father worked hard and spent a lot of time at the pub. Her only sibling was a brother who was a few years older, and spent quite a lot of time playing sport. She described how he used to torment her—more than just sibling interplay—to which she attributed her lack of confidence and shyness. The home they lived in had no hot water or indoor toilet, and had a gas meter where a gasman used to collect the money weekly.

One strong memory was when, at twelve, she was moved into her parents’ room behind a screen where she could hear them having sex. At twelve she also developed a range of illnesses which keep her home from school for two weeks out of three between the ages of 12 and 14 when she left school. She felt her schooling was very disrupted as she could never catch up, but business school lifted her self esteem and she did well.

At seventeen, an aunt died leaving eight small children, so Julie’s mother took in the two year old which changed Julie’s life dramatically as the former closeness with her mother was over. She married early—to get away from home—and had 2 children. As the result of a painful marriage separation after 20 years, during which her husband was unemployed for 10 years and eventually enacted domestic abuse on her, she moved into public housing with her 2 children. She often referred to this movement into ‘Housing Commission’ with some shame.
In the time since Julie started studying and working at MAE, her father developed pancreatitis, had a leg amputated and died. Her mother developed a tumour on the neck, and had surgery for glaucoma and cataracts. Her teenage daughter developed a form of rheumatoid arthritis, her separated husband died of cancer, and at 20, her son developed malignant testicular cancer. She herself had a chronic thyroid condition and heart arrhythmia.

Julie’s ACE involvement began when she read an advertisement in the local Coburg newspaper, when she rang about classes. She attended at MAE for a literacy assessment and was placed in VCE English levels 1 and 2 after an RPL assessment of her range of skills and life experiences such as conducting school activities and volunteer work as a guide for a local historic prison tours. This placement was important to her because she felt she had always been inferior for not doing her Leaving Certificate (year 11). Since completing a number of subjects in VCE, she had finished a Certificate 11 in IT online, financial software training and had worked as a part-time office worker, joined the voluntary committee and become MAE’s chairperson for 3 years.

Frank

Frank is a 55 year old Australian-born English speaker whose education followed a conventional path from state primary school, through an outer Melbourne secondary school, to university where he completed an honours degree in chemistry and a diploma of education. He taught science and maths in a country secondary school for a year then resigned as soon as he had fulfilled the requirements of his government-funded studentship. He hated teaching and went on to have a wide range of jobs including: handyman, laboratory assistant, and computer net-worker.
Although he was relocated during his primary grade four year, his schooling years went smoothly as he learnt easily with a retentive memory, and had a stable family life with only one younger sibling. One of his strongest memories of childhood was his parents’ membership of the communist party which he felt set them apart from the mainstream, creating his “paranoid streak”. He was forced to be secretive about their involvement right through his primary and secondary years, although he felt their difference gave him status once he was a university student. His family was highly literate, both parents writing for journals and other publications—although not tertiary educated—and he was encouraged to learn, to read (mainly books from the Russian press) and to undertake a degree. He claimed he had inherited anxiety from his father—who did not influence his life greatly in other ways. He referred to his one sibling—a sister—who had minimal influence in his life, because “she’s a girl, you know”.

Frank’s involvement in ACE came about as a result of a family member’s engagement at MAE. He was in some ways atypical of the people involved in the centre which is why he was approached for an interview as, although he had been involved for over 10 years, he claimed he had remained only because he was paid to do the VCE administrative database (‘VASS’) and the IT work in the organisation. Despite this apparent lack of personal engagement in ACE, he was also a typical participant in that he completed many more unpaid hours of work in the centre and has multiple relatives engaged in MAE.

When asked about his opinion of ACE he described it as having been a bit like a “mother’s club” when he first became involved, although he changed this to describing it as a very different kind of schooling for people who had been through some very heavy,
traumatic experiences in their lives. He then told a number of stories he had heard during his work at MAE to exemplify these experiences, and summed up the ACE experience as a place where participants aren’t going to be judged if they retell their often traumatic tales.

Frank did not give his own personal stories, or seem to think ACE related in any way to his own personal life experiences or value systems. However, he was articulate about the changes he had seen in last ten years of ACE. The introduction of IT, increased funding and a more professional image he thought were positives. But he was negative about some aspects of change, particularly in relation to the stress and pressure on the manager’s position, the amount of accountability and the contrast between the amounts of government funding given to the other sectors compared to the token gestures granted to ACE.

Lee

Lee is an Australian born woman in her forties. She had a happy childhood because she felt being god at sports ad given her self-esteem. After an average state schooling she completed year 12 then worked in a variety of jobs. Before approaching ACE she had recently separated from her husband and was a sole parent caring for two daughters, what she describes as her life having taken a 360 degree turn.

Working long hours in the hospitality industry, Lee heard about ACE from one of the chefs who worked in the restaurant where she was working in the hospitality industry—his wife taught in a number of ACE centres including MAE. She had always loved the idea of becoming a teacher, but felt she’d missed her opportunity after being rejected in an initial application. She started in ACE to complete the bridging activities of the Diploma of Further Education which she had also heard had 100% success in applications to tertiary study.
After a successful application, she was accepted for a Bachelor of Education and was completing a second year after gaining high marks during her first year.

**Mike**

Mike was an Australian-born male in his late forties who had a fascinating family life in outer Sydney. His mother was only 16 when she gave birth to him, and his parents separated when he was a few months old. His father and paternal grandmother had custody of him—which was unusual at that time. Until he was six years old, he thought his grandmother was his mother—because his father called her ‘Mum’ so did he. He knew his 99 year old great grandfather well but lived with his grandparents except briefly when his father remained and he gained a step-sister. Although an uncle offered to adopt him, he declined and remained living with his widowed grandfather until he remarried a woman with three children who was about the same age as Mike’s father. He always referred to them as his “aunt and cousins” because of the complexity of the relationship.

Mike describes his community as disadvantaged, but his complex family as rich and he was very close to his grandfather’s second wife. He did not play the kinds of sports played in the western suburbs of Sydney and can remember being accused of being a sissy or poofter, with the choice of either delinquency or education.

He went to work at 15 but with the encouragement of the personnel worker at Waltons, went to university part-time and did a degree.

He first entered an equivalents NSW ACE centre—the National Arts School in Liverpool—aiming at learning the flute, but has spent twenty years in many capacities working in Universities and ACE.
Ferhat

A twenty-six year old male, Ferhat’s parents were from Turkey and his childhood was complicated because of the mixture of speaking English to his parents at home, but Turkish with paternal grandparents with whom he lived for most of his childhood. He attended the local state primary school then Moreland City College which was formed after an amalgamation of local secondary schools such as Moreland, Coburg and Newlands.

With two younger brothers, and despite language and cultural difficulties, Ferhat did well at secondary school despite its poor local reputation (it closed at the end of 2004), passed year 12 and was offered a place at VU in the Diploma in IT course. At the end of his course he completed the former Certificate IV in Workplace Training (Category 11), then a fitness instructor’s course. He has worked a range of jobs from IT and web maintenance, through fitness advisor to pizza delivery and video retail.

By 26 his life experiences included being traditionally circumcised at 12 years old in front of a large crowd in Turkey, separating from his family and living in his car, plus a number of experiences which he would prefer not to be documented.

Ferhat entered ACE when he was 20 years old and not working. He was referred by librarians to the MAE ‘Youth in ACE’ IT program running in 1998. Although his IT skills were already more advanced than anyone in the group—including the facilitator—he was interested in assisting others to earn, in socialising and learning more about community education. He quickly became the organisation’s consultant on diversity and a volunteer IT support-person. He undertook some hours of paid tutoring before finding full-time work but then joined and remained on the committee for 6 years. He remains an integral part of
the organization, assisting any student or teacher with advice, acting as a personal support person to the manager and advising people on health and fitness issues.

**Neen**

Neen is a forty-something woman of a local Australian family, who left school at the end of year 11, and went straight into work in a bank. She recalls a happy childhood being the youngest of three children after a nine year gap, and thought she had been a bit of a spoilt child. She felt that having a close and supportive family—despite the normal frictions with siblings—was a large influence in her life as was “having the gift of the gab”.

Se attended Glenroy Primary school, recalling one humiliating incident very clearly. Having left her desk after everyone was told not to, the teacher made her hold the back of his jacket while he walked between classrooms and the library. She commented that she wasn’t one of the ‘in’ crowd at the all-girls Pascoe Vale secondary school she attended and it wasn’t until about fourth year [year 10] that she had a close friend. She felt alienated at school, not part of the groups and clubs.

She married young and had 2 children, then worked in a variety of jobs including office work at a primary school.

Neen was told about ACE by a friend doing a computer course at MAE. She wanted to learn Excel as she already knew MS Word from her 6 years of working as a teacher aide.

**Biddy**

As her father worked in the postal service, Biddy was born in rural Victoria but shifted to Cheltenham in the Melbourne suburbs at a young age. She was the first girl born in the family after three older brothers; a position she felt advantaged her throughout her childhood. She found schooling easy as she was encouraged by the nuns at her all-girls
school, and continued her love of learning throughout her life. She felt the Brigidine nuns and their social justice values had led to her interest in feminism and had a strong influence on her own personal values.

Although she never met her, she was named after her Irish grandmother and was strongly influenced by stories about her to the extent she felt a personal connection which manifested itself in imaginary conversations between them. Her own mother’s keen interest in learning provided her with excellent female role models so she went straight to university and became a teacher in the secondary technical system. After having children and returning to work, she became an acknowledged leader and innovator in the field of adult teaching, especially in relation to literacy, numeracy and further education.

**May**

May was a forty-something woman who was born in Burnie, Tasmania to working-class parents. She had one male and one female sibling and describes her father’s honesty and core values as having a big influence on her life, and she maintains those values and ‘small town’ community interest through a strong social conscience. Her father raised the children as a sole parent.

She wasn’t socially confident at school although she enjoyed primary school. At secondary schools she “ran off the rails a bit” and wasn’t one of the ‘in’ crowd. She felt that because of her father’s own lack of schooling—he left at 13 years—there was no model or family culture promoting education. Education, apprenticeships and training were promoted more to males than females. Her brother dropped out of school and although her sister enjoyed education, she had left home by the time May was ten so did not have a big influence.
May left school without year 12, but returned as an adult to complete a degree. She worked in various community development capacities before applying for a part-time position co-ordinating a women’s neighbourhood house where she stayed for some years. She left and did project work and part-time management of another ACE centre. At the time of the interview, she was working as Acting Manager of one large ACE centre, and on the committee of another.

**Ben**

Ben was a 35 year old male who was born in Malta and migrated to Australia with his parents at 6 years old. He had no English when he arrived so went to primary school and learnt English there. He had no siblings which he mentioned as having been a very strong influence in his life, as he would have liked brothers and sisters, as he grew up an extremely introverted shy child. Although he didn’t think his lack of English was a big problem in his life, being an only child meant even his third grade teacher remarked that he didn’t get involved in anything at school.

He went to a primary state school but rather than have him attend Brunswick High School with its “bad reputation”, his parents sent him to a Catholic school in grade 6. He hated leaving his friends, but traveled from West Brunswick to East Melbourne for years 7 to 10. He completed the last two years of secondary school at St Joseph’s College in North Melbourne which he did not like but would have preferred to go to a co-educational school to help him overcome his shyness. He was not good at sport and felt he didn’t fit into the normal school structure being teased from many years about his glasses. Having been born prematurely in Malta, his eyes weren’t fully developed and he was placed in an incubator without eye-coverings so his sight was so badly affected that he had to wear very think
lenses as a child. He told a fascinating story of being so small he could fit in someone’s hand, and that his father could pass his wedding ring up his arm.

After school he started work in the State—later Commonwealth—Bank where he stayed for 15 years. He suffered health problems and left the bank. He entered Diploma of Further Education after hearing about it from his mother-in-law, completed a successful year and entered Kangan Batman TAFE to finish a Certificate IV in IT (Multimedia), then returned to MAE to complete Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training and a Certificate IV in Business Administration. At the time of the interview he worked in three ACE centres: MAE, Preston Reservoir ACE and the Glenroy program.

**Maeve**

Maeve’s family always lived in Brunswick. A woman of 64, she describes her parents as constantly poor working class, with her father having a “few problems with grog and backing horses”. They had to live with her grandparents which led to friction, and Maeve was often a go-between in all of the fighting. She spent most of her time in a room with her mother, or going visiting the aunties who lived close-by. Neighbours were “crooks, gangsters and a wild sort of people”, but there was a strong sense of community compared with the current state of isolation people feel.

She hated South West Brunswick primary school and felt she was a “sort of a misfit and nobody like me”, although her considerably older brother and sister did well there. She felt her childhood had had a huge influence on her life, particularly her grandmother who was a very strong woman and used to read to her. She went to Moreland Central school [later Moreland High School which closed down] but left school at 15 years to learn to use a calculating machine, then worked for Rupert Murdoch at Southdown Press where
working conditions were good. She described her education as “I didn’t like exams, I didn’t like school, I didn’t like the structure of it—of school, having to go and—being told.”

She married a recent German-speaking immigrant, and had three children before divorcing when she became an unemployed supporting parent. She described as adults: her son as having all sorts of problems with drugs and gambling, a successful daughter with health and fertility problems, and another pregnant daughter with a child with learning difficulties and partner with a chronic health condition. She was living with an unmarried, retired brother with health problems.

Maeve had found out about ACE about twenty years previously when her daughter had suggested she become a volunteer literacy tutor at the Coburg Adult Literacy organization. In the following years, Maeve has been a volunteer one-to-one tutor, a classroom assistant, an administrative assistant, and a committee member both at MAE and another local ACE centre.

**Gladys**

Gladys was a 50 year old woman who was born in England to a working-class family she described as being in an area ‘like in Coronation Street’. She was the oldest in a family of six children, having five younger brothers. She felt that both her position in the family and being the only girl had an enormous impact on her early development, as did her family’s working-class values and expectations. She emigrated after the collapse of her first marriage and lived in Germany for years, when her second marriage also broke down, after which she traveled and migrated to Australia.

Gladys attended a state school in Birmingham school where she told a series of stories about having to wear a nightie the first day of school because of poverty, and how,
as the oldest child and only female with 5 younger brothers, she became almost a family servant.

She originally left home and school at the end of O levels (Equivalent of year11) but returned to education in England for a teaching traineeship (add long story of later problems).

In Australia, she has worked in a variety of places of employment including the public service, as both a teacher and as the co-ordinator of an ACE organisation, and at the time of the interview, she was unemployed but retraining as part of a NEIS program and working at setting up a consultancy advising ACE organizations on business and curriculum documentation. She was also chairperson of an ACE organisation.

**Jules**

Jules lived in the Moreland area as a child. She had 2 brothers, one of whom died at an early age. Combined her mother’s terminal illness and death during her primary schooling years, she felt these two family deaths had had a major ongoing influence on her own life. Because the family lived in near-poverty and she was raised by her maternal grandmother, she had trouble engaging at school and was in constant conflict with the nuns at her local co-educational parish school where her older brother was beaten for not being able to read and write. The constant friction between her grandmother struggling to raise 2 children and her father because of his drinking, meant Jules lived in a constant state of tension which impacted on all social and educational aspects of her life.

After experiencing sexual abuse as an early teenager, Jules left school, eventually returning to complete year 12 and find employment in the post office. At 30 years, she decided to fulfil a childhood ambition to be a nurse and entered training.
At the time of her interview, she had relocated to one of the larger border cities and had been working as a triple-certificated nursing sister for some years as well as serving on the committee of her local ACE centre.

**Steve**

Steve was an Australian-born male in his late thirties, who told a long personal story of being bullied as child by neighbours, a swimming coach and at two schools; of parental marriage break-down and subsequent custody battles in court; of a car accident with ongoing health problems; of a marriage breakdown and loss of home plus custody of a child; and of continuing issues with chronic depression and ongoing unemployment. (He didn’t mind the story being told but didn’t want to go over it all again on tape as he was feeling depressed at the time—happy to discuss ACE)

Once a trade qualified chef with a brilliant resume, Steve could no longer work in the hospitality industry after his car accident, so presented at MAE to complete a Certificate I in IT as part of his enrolment in the Diploma of Further Education, and undertook volunteer work tutoring a senior student in IT and completing data entry. He pathwayed into a Certificate IV in Electronic Publishing then returned to MAE to complete the Certificate IV In assessment and Workplace Training.

He also did training for level two first aide and level three security guard certificates, and has worked spasmodically and suffered a drug-related assault in one workplace yet receiving no workcover or even medical payments.

**Tom**

Tom was an Australian, English-speaking male of twenty-two. He lived a settled family life with his parents and three considerably older [half] siblings—which he felt had
impacted profoundly on his development as he effectively had five ‘parents’ who had always been supportive and caring. His story included mentions of how his elderly grandmother had told him he was the luckiest little boy in the world as his siblings had only ever loved him and never been jealous or resented his late intrusions into their lives. On the contrary; they took him everywhere socially and treated him like a special pet. He showed a photo of himself as a small boy in sunglasses sitting in the front of his nineteen year old brother’s ‘decked-out, shaggin’ wagon’ as an example of them being special mates.

When he had been a baby, his mother had been a semi-invalid for over a year and his primary carers had been his father (evenings and weekends), aunt (weekdays) and siblings (after school and weekends), although his mother had always been on-hand, she spent four periods in hospital during this time, and was incapacitated when at home.

Although his siblings had lived a more difficult life because of marriage break-ups, custody battles, blended family and low income, Tom had followed a ‘traditional’ pattern of education from state primary and secondary schools in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, gaining an ENTER of over 90 and achieving his first choice in tertiary entry—a Business/Information Systems degree at RMIT.

Due to family members’ involvement, he had attended MAE’s Christmas Party since he was a small boy, helping out with decorations and mixing socially with adult students. He listed the family members who had at various times been participants in ACE through MAE as: mother, father, three aunts, brother, brother-in-law and two cousins, as well as his long-time girl-friend and her mother.

Because of this deep family association, Tom has remained a volunteer for the organization, assisting with IT—his area of expertise. During his degree course, he wanted
to undertake a unit of a TAFE level course which would both satisfy the requirement for one of the RMIT “...” and give him an additional skill on his resume, so enrolled in the ‘Train Small Groups’ unit of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training at MAE. As part of this unit, he trained a number of senior-aged women in using MS Powerpoint.

When interviewed, Tom had been working as an IT Systems office manager for three years in a prestigious company, and commented that his association with ACE had been for about eighteen years.

**Ilisapeci**

Ilisapeci’s parents were from Canada and Fiji. When her mother told her own mother that she was marrying a South Seas Islander, she “was horrified that her daughter was marrying a black man. Um. It was very clear. She sent my mother a message saying, ‘I don’t want any black grandchildren. Thank you’”. A twenty-four years old at the time of the interview, Ilisapeci’s story was extremely complex, and some details have been deleted. However, she was born in Suva and her mother took her from her father and brought her to Australia where she attended a state primary school in New South Wales, then started a secondary school a private girls’ school where she was taunted as the only mixed-race child. After long years of abuse by her mother, Ilisapeci left home at 15 years and spent five years on the streets in Kings Cross. During that time she worked as a prostitute, became heroin dependent and was involved in many incidents of petty crime.

She met a man and moved to Melbourne with him after he had given her assistance for her addiction and she then commenced a methadone program. She also enrolled at MAE to get assistance and support to regain some education and increase her life-chances.
Her initial placement interview revealed a great deal of interest in the written word and that she had a reading and writing level of approximately year 11—with a number of gaps in what would have been learnt educational processes such as text-study, essay-writing and keeping effective records of student work. She was placed in VCE English 1 & 2, a computer class and Diploma of Further Education.

When interviewed, she had almost completed a Diploma course. She had been contacted by her father and established an ongoing connection with her large, extended family of South Seas Islanders and was planning a visit when she could save the money. This connection with her racial origins and paternal family was of enormous pride to her and had created strong motivation for staying clear of heroin.

**George**

George was born in New Zealand. His immediate and extended family was enormously complex and difficult to chart, with multiple marriages, half and step siblings on both paternal and maternal sides—up to grandparents as well. Raised for his first six years by his grandmother, he left school early when he also left home. This was due to friction with a step-father, although he admitted that he had enjoyed sport more than education and had not always been a good boy.

George worked as a carpenter and labourer for many years. He had migrated to Australia, married, had a child and been divorced and lost touch with a number of his immediate family members.

At the time of the interview George was suffering chronic pain from industrial accidents and had been engaged in court action for 5 years, for compensation. After his accident he had re-engaged in education, completing studies in IT and Occupational Health
and Safety so that he could adjust to employment which was more sedentary than his former trade.

**Jane**

Jane was a fifty-eight year old woman when interviewed. She had attended local state primary and state schools, had no problems with learning, eventually becoming a librarian. She explained that she had suffered from the social and peer problems from obesity at school and had always hated her secondary years, which had left her with very negative images of mainstream schooling.

She spoke very positively of her close immediate and extended family members, especially of her parents whose marriage had remained stable.

As a young woman she suffered from panic attacks which returned in cycles of approximately ten years, leaving her unable to catch public transport, unable to eat many foods and eventually without the energy to participate in social life. During the first period of this disabling condition, she left employment after which she stayed home and became a companion-carer to her elderly mother.

She had joined in a women’s group at MAE, then studied accredited IT and business, as well as becoming—at various stages—a committee member and volunteer working at maintaining MAE’s records.
Appendix 1H

See 013AppendixXLS
Appendix 1 I

Summary of Minutes of Meetings of Committee of Management, 1994

February

The treasurer’s report was not available as the books were at the auditor’s. Delivery of the accredited CGEA was commencing with students being offered 4 hours of tuition per week instead of the former 2 to 2.5 hours. The co-ordination position became full time, an increase from .8 in 1993. $600 was to be spent on resources. The Christmas Party was voted a great success with an excellent Father Christmas. The VCE presentation day went well and also the launch of the women’s writing group book where J Mc ‘from the Rialto’ attended. (CALA, 1994a)

March

Annual General Meeting. Treasurer reported that the books were still at the auditor’s, and thanked the administrative assistant and co-ordinator. The teachers reported they were producing a newsletter, developing a ‘later learning’ project like the U3A and that the organisation would be taking over the Board of Students VCE requirements from DVLC. Office bearers were appointed. A publicity officer was nominated and the vote to change the organisation’s name to ‘Coburg Adult Education Assoc’ passed. The co-ordinator reported an increase in funding from all sources: State recurrent, Commonwealth Growth, CALP & DEET. (CALA, 1994d)

April.
The organisation’s finances were being moved on to a spreadsheet developed by the IT support worker. A discussion ensued concerning a staff matter about which a motion of endorsement of the coordinator’s actions was passed. A State Works and Services application was discussed with the decision being to apply for Partitioning for the office area, a new work station, improved lighting and a stand for an urn. A two page report on the staff matter was attached, critical of the fact that although 4 staff members had been paid project funding, 2 had completed no work at all and their positions—paid project workers not as teachers—were to be terminated. (CALA, 1994c)

**May**

The new treasurer submitted a list of ‘ground rules’ which she felt were necessary for her position. Six committee members had attended a training workshop, a discussion on rotating the chair each meeting was discussed and committee roles were to be documented. A situation concerning the faxing of organisational correspondence to other organisations by a disgruntled worker was discussed. (CALA, 1994b)

**July**

The name-change to Coburg Adult Education Assoc. was confirmed by the Corporate Affairs office, then discussion ensued about council amalgamations and the decision to change the organisation’s name yet again to the name of the new municipality was passed [it was still under council discussion]. The treasurer was to prepare the pro forma of an agenda form so that the committee could rotate the chair. Stamping books, additional tea and coffee facilities and positioning new
furniture were discussed. Flowers were to be sent to an absent staff member. The DEET tender was successful and delivering extra classes at Brunswick were reported, as was negotiation of the ACFE Service Agreement for 1995. (CAEA, 1994b)

**September**

The meeting room was booked for the Christmas Party. The women’s group were developing a booklet and the annual organisation's Christmas publication ‘Coburgers’ was discussed. Two new tutors were employed during the month. The ACFE service Agreement had been submitted and would be negotiated with R K and not the regional manager, MCo purchases of furniture and their placement were discussed. The size of the committee had been criticised by an ACFE staff member, and the aim to increase the ESL and NESB numbers discussed. (CAEA, 1994a)

**November (3rd).**

There VCE display day had a morning tea attended by 50 people. The decision that all teaches be required to teacher CGEA including GCOs was reached. New volunteers had been trained by the coordinator. The catering and Christmas party were discussed. The local council decided that the organisation was to pay rent of $2,600 per annum and the name change to Moreland Adult Education Assoc. confirmed. (MAE, 1994b)

**November**

The Christmas Party was discussed at length with the decision being made to order from the Chicken Machine instead. A thank-you letter was to be sent to ‘FS’
for volunteering to be Father Christmas, the dips, bread, salad and fruit platters were allocated to members and one member’s daughter was to arrange for her theatre group to perform. The resignation of a committee member due to other activities was presented. (MAE, 1994a). Attachments included a draft position description for committee members plus the notification of rental payment from the council. (Malouf, 1994)
Appendix 1J

Summary of Minutes of Committee of Management Meetings, 2004

This review of the minutes of the committee meetings as been recorded for two reasons: Firstly so that they can be compared to the 1994 minutes reported earlier, and secondly, to demonstrate that 2004 was the year that the content of the meetings changed, and there was a considerable increase in the amount of supplementary documentation members were expected to absorb.

February

The meeting covered a discussion on finding new members for the committee, setting a date for the annual general meeting before the final date allowed by the constitution rules and decisions about responding o the council’s proposals to change parking restrictions in the four car parks contiguous to the library. Time was spent planning a twenty-first birthday celebration based on the first documented organisational records, although there was general agreement that the true date would have been at least a year earlier. (Minutes of the committee of management, 25 February, 2004, 2004)

March

Committee members congratulated the manager on winning the Moreland City Council’s Education and Training Women’s Award, and continued planning the proposed twenty-fist birthday. Discussion ensued on the proposal to run more advanced level courses, and arranging training for the committee members. There was a presentation by the project worker for the State Library & Multimedia Vic-funded My Connected Community (MC2).
May

The meeting in the month of May introduced longer and more complex minutes which dealt with the burglary, its on-going police contacts and the implication for changing financial and banking processes at MAE. The incumbent chairperson resigned and a replacement was co-opted, and there was discussion on changes to the existing web-site including its contents, its transferral from the MS Frontpage to Macromedia Dreamweaver and a delivery by the project worker for the ‘managing diversity’ project worker, and the planned professional development sessions with Delia Bradshaw.

June

Three pieces of correspondence received attention: The ACFE strategic planning survey, the OTTE concession fee reimbursement and the list of AQTF standards which were supplied to each member.

There was considerable discussion on proposed changes to the organisation’s administration and financial reporting systems, with the treasurer expressing concern that the organisation was not compliant because of the brevity of the financial reports it was receiving. The manager was requested to employ a consultant to make recommendations for the next committee meeting. Continuing concerns about the finances included the ANTA audit requirement that handwritten, paper-based receipts would no longer be considered compliant and all future receipts needed to be electronic.

The committee was informed that they had been covered by director’s insurance for many years and supplied with copies of the policies. It was also given the notification that
the organisation would receive reimbursement for concession fees paid in 2003, in recognition of the role played by ACE organisations “promoting equity of access to learners” (Fowler, 2004) (p.1).

Planning for new Risk Management and OH & S policies and practices was detailed and included additional handouts to be considered for the July meeting.

The ongoing dialogue about some MAE students enrolled with RMIT as part of Learnlinks, not receiving Statements of Attainment or full Certificates since 2002 was explained and the decision was made that the manager persist in following up this issue as it had seriously disadvantaged students who were already suffering multiple social, health and employment disadvantages. (Minutes of the committee of management, 2nd June, 2004, 2004)

July

A discussion of the organisation’s bank balance followed the manager’s application to be reclassified as she had been on the same level for 6 years, during which time, the responsibilities, number of personnel and levels of delivery to diploma had increased markedly. The committee voted to increase the manager’s pay and level after research had been completed comparing the ACE PACCT Award and the TAFE PACCT Award.

The manager disseminated copies of the report on corporate governance which had been produced by an independent financial consultant as had been requested at the June meeting. This five page report stated that although MAE “meets a level of minimum acceptability on Organisational Performance and Compliance” (Gilham, 2004) (p. 2), it recommended eight changes to the existing reporting system.
The OH & S policies and practices were discussed with members receiving an eight page document to read before the next meeting. The ongoing diversity workshops were also discussed, with the possibility of an online forum being set up on MC2.

The organisation had been granted eligibility to apply for government funding on 6th June, and the certificate presented (Hebert, 2004).

The organisation received copies of a covering letter and synopsis (Forbes, 2004) for the 2004 Ministerial Statement (Kosky, 2004) which engendered a discussion of strategic planning for 2005, and copies of the 24 page document were provided to members.

The 21st birthday celebrations were again mentioned, with the possibility of external catering being discussed due to the lack of volunteers to participate. (Minutes of the committee of management meeting, 13th July, 2004, 2004)

August

The three quotations for financial services were discussed and the one recommended by the manager was ratified with the decision to pay the new organisational accountant [as distinct from the organisation’s auditor] additional hours to visit MAE and alter the existing MYOB setup.

The possibility of relocating part of the organisation from the Bellfield Building to a shared premises was discussed after initial approaches by the regional office of the northern Migrant Resource Centre. Concerns about the OH & S issues raised during a routine check of the Bellfield building were discussed.

Continuing discussions on a risk management strategy and the need for a working party, plus the professional indemnity insurance took place.
The committee decided to ask the project worker to place a display in the library for Adult Learner’s Week rather than the manager. A decision was ratified to postpone the proposed 21st birthday celebration due to the lack of [committee and other] volunteers to assist in organising the function.

October

Certificates of appreciation were disseminated to all committee members and sent to all current volunteers. The new extended financial report was discussed at length and received unanimous approval.

The notification from OTTE that approval had been given to extend MAE’s scope of approval to deliver the course, 21571VIC Course in Introduction to Community and Event Volunteering (Adams, 2004). This was in preparation to conducting initial training for disadvantaged people wanting to work as volunteers at the Commonwealth Games in 2006.

The rest of the meeting dealt with strategic planning for 2005, with the decision made to aim for maintenance of existing funded areas in language and literacy, VCE, and general preparatory (employment skills), and to shift the allocation for previously funded business courses into whichever was a higher priority target for which MAE already had the scope—such as IT or the new workplace training certificates. Maintenance or increasing the AMEP delivery, and seeking alternative funding sources were discussed but the emphasis was placed on maintenance given the huge upheavals experienced in the year through the floods, asbestos clean-up, burglary and staff changes, with the AQTF audit early in the new year. (Minutes of the committee of management meeting, 26th October, 2004, 2004)
November

Considerable time was spent on discussing the diversity plan, funding proposal to ACFE, and the details of the sustainability plan which was new, and a partial substitution for the former ACE Cluster funding. Submission of the year’s statistics were discussed, with the report that all targets had been achieved. Planning for the application to continue to deliver hours for RMIT took place.

Reports were received concerning the MC2 project which was to be finalised after two years by April 2005 and a committee managing diversity report concerning the training provided both internally and for other organisations. A social evening out for the committee was planned as a closure of the project.

The MRC was organising a launch of the Munro Street building with Senator McGauran in attendance.

For only the second time since its existence, the first being because of the flooding to the venue, MAE did not hold an annual end of year party which had formerly been extremely well attended by student of all ages, cultures and languages, because of the lack of volunteers to organise it. The December meeting of the committee was a shared restaurant meal with the paid staff of the organisation.
Appendix 1K

See 013AppendixXLS
Appendix 1 L

See 013AppendixXLS
Appendix 1M

Primary school

Parents: Divorce, Death

Secondary school

Siblings: Number, Place, Attitude

Tertiary

Extended Family

School Type: Sex, Private/State

‘Type’ Catholic

State, Private

‘Type’ Single sex

Co-ed

Lifelong Learning

Family Values: support, help

‘Type’ Family

Religion, Place

Life Learning

Marriage, Divorce

Sport

Violence

Language/ Literacy

Health, Own, Family

Accreditation Certification

Drugs

Curricula

DIMENSIONS

Personal

Educational

Community

Business

Geographic Locations

Local

Venues Libraries

N Houses

Transport

Accessibility

Social Capital Putting Back Helping

Charity

Diversity

Multiplicity of roles

Longevity of connection

Volunteers

Paper Work Administration

Audits, AQTF Registration Scopes

Salaries

Centrelink

Fees

Funding Reducing Projects

Costs: Resources IT

Planning: Strategic Business

Insurance Legal

Work stress

Employment
Appendix 1 N

See Appendix 2 for all full Annotated Interviews
Appendix 1 O

Connecting Personalities

While Boyd referred to the possible tensions between the cognitive and intuitive faculties in terms of analytical psychology, it is also possible to propose that the two can provide dual aspects to education and the learning environment. Maintaining the connection with Jungian analytical psychology rather than Freudian psychoanalysis validates a great many of the practices and attitudes which pervade the ACE sector. These include: personal support which is often extended into familial groups; alternate forms of flexible delivery including online, one-to-one, RPL and small ‘uneconomic’ groups; both accredited and unaccredited studies with recreational and volunteer training; familiar and accessible local venues and a sense of connectedness within specific communities of shared interests and geographic location. As well as satisfying the rational/objective through the delivery of the accredited training packages and the impersonality of online teaching, ACE delivery includes the subjective and intuitive factors inherit in one-to-one with personal contact and the emotive relationships formed with local places and personalities.

In terms of analytical psychology, the duality of objectivity and subjectivity can be equated to the attitude types Jung described as extraversion and introversion (Jung, undated) (pp.416-427 and 471-477) which indicates the general direction of the libido movement. Extending the attitude types to include the function types of intuition, sensation, feeling and thinking, (Jung, undated) (pp 428-470 and 480-517) demonstrates how all of these personality-types are addressed in the ACE environment in contrast to mainstream education which may address only two or three. While this research merely touches on this complex area in order to offer one explanation for why such a diversity of personalities
engage in ACE and remain long-term community members, it opens the possibility for future research relating Jungian analytical psychology—based in Jung’s work itself and not the more business-oriented Myers-Briggs or alternate divergences—related to ACE.

The interviewees of MAE clearly demonstrated these four contrasting personality-types, not in relation to the four groups which were based on identifying disadvantages and their lingering effects, but in relation to satisfying whichever of the types—both attitude and function—to which they belonged. Without undertaking an in-depth analysis of the psychological implication of adult students or using one of the quasi-‘Myers-Briggs’-type of rigidly classifying each person by their perceived characteristics, to make sense of why people engage in ACE, it was still possible to identify how each of the personality-types could relate to one of the divergent aspects the sector. The two following examples—while brief over-views only—showed how some obvious characteristics apply to a range of personality-types.

**Frank, the Introverted Thinking Type**

The interviewee who remained outside of many of the activities and relationships within MAE was Frank, who, from the first of his interview maintained his lack of interest in engaging on a personal level with the sector. Although he had spent many years in the sector, he related his initial engagement to ‘stopping his wife moaning’ about her burdens at work, and then remained, drawing a small salary to supplement his main work as an IT networker in a school. His reasons for being at MAE were entirely objective. Even though his prodigious memory had stored some of the stories of other participants which he retold, his personal narrative was always of being disengaged, believing ACE was for others—the disadvantaged, the disengaged and those needing support. This is typical of Jung’s own
description of an introverted thinking type where “facts [others’ stories] are collected as evidence or examples for theory, but never for their own sake” (Jung, undated) (p.481). Frank, typifying the thinking-type, maintained what Jung referred to as the “conscious contents” (p.545) as concepts of self-sufficiency by constantly denying his personal engagement in ACE, perpetuating his own belief that he had no need of transformation or community-connectedness. This was despite the length of his time at MAE (15 years) for a minimal wage at AEO level 2 ($17 per hour) when he had post-graduate qualifications in science, teaching and computer.

As was constant and primarily evident throughout frank’s interview, he exhibited the classic characteristics of his type, often appearing cold and arbitrary. He exemplifies Jung’s contention that his type does not make a good, personal teacher because he would be unable to relate to the mentality of his pupils so teaching had little interest for him. This repeats the actual story Frank told of his years as a student-teacher and then science teacher which he undertook for only one year.

**Julie, the Extraverted Feeling Type**

At the other extreme, and of the opposite attitude and function types, was interviewee Julie, who, more than any other interviewee, constantly reiterated use of terms of rejection and acceptance. Through repetition of ‘like’ and ‘dislike’ in relation to schooling, single-sex schools, nuns, sport, volunteerism, paperwork, change, and many other subjects, she characterised the extraverted feeling type’s arrangement of concepts according to their values (Jung, undated) (pp.545-548).

Like’s Frank opposing type, all of Julie’s value-judgements were based on rational processes, but unlike his concepts, her affective classifications offered no intellectual and
critical clarification. Whereas Frank’s dialogue was littered with explanations and reasoned justification such as interpreting why people attend ACE centres, and justification for his parents’ actions, Julie’s responses simply ‘were’, with no further analysis.

Julie’s stories related to a dislike of sex due to the strictures placed on the girls by the nuns, by her parents’ sexual activities behind the bedroom screen and the multiple forms of violence she suffered in her marriage, recreate Jung’s contention that her type’s unconscious world of ideas is often centred on sexual neuroses.

Although both of the examples above are from the ‘rational’ types, two contrasting instances of their opposing ‘irrational’ types (Jung, undated) (p. 468): sensation and intuitive, are equally obvious in Ilisapeci and Rani.

**Ilisapeci, the Introverted Sensation Type**

One of the characteristics of Ilisapeci’s type was described by Jung in terms of their propensity for becoming “a victim to the aggressiveness and ambitions of others” (p.503) which was exemplified not only by her mother’s repeated instances of violent abuse which were evidenced by a restraining order, but also by the drug-sellers and pimps who preyed on her vulnerability. In addition, there were the instances of extreme violence which she suffered at the hands of clients when working as a prostitute in Kings Cross.

Where no possibility of any form of artistic self-expression exists for this type, other functions such as feeling and thinking remain unconscious, and they not only have trouble understanding others but also their own actions and emotions. For Ilisapeci, this was evident in her destructive cycle of heroin and alcohol which had been perpetuated by her own perceptions of herself as a worthless individual inhabiting an alienated malevolent
world (p.503), having no cultural heritage—as her mother made her deny her South Sea Island heritage and thus little knowledge of her father and his family or culture.

Even after ‘Jim’ transported her to a Victorian country town and physically intervened to overcome her addictions, and she undertook methadone treatment, she continued to remain alienated from reality, only demonstrating integration in society and maintaining a sense of self-worth and health after she started to study and write, fulfilling Jung’s contention that sensation-type relies on artistic expression to become complete.

Her transformative learning was enhanced by her recent recognition and integration into her father’s South Sea Islander’s family and culture.

While the true sensation-type uses sense-reactions for guidance, the opposite is true for the intuitive, who experiences the sensations but only as a guide toward a possibly distant vision, creating expectations.

**Rani-the Extraverted Intuitive Type**

Rani’s interview contained multiple examples of transmission of images—or perceptions of relations and conditions—each with potential which can only be unlocked by the intuitive facilities. Actual existence can become a burden which needs to be alleviated in some way, often by becoming what Jung called “the natural advocate of every minority” (p. 466). For Rani, this was exemplified by her explanations for her own mother’s irrational fear of touching her for five years—then re-creating a scene of forgiveness and her reiteration of catering for the learning of her students with potential, She reiterated her stories of teaching being part of her own spiritual journey, which was one of the most effective examples of where the intuitive type becomes “fused and blended with the divined possibility” (Jung, undated) (p. 467).
These brief examples of how all types are represented, proposes that this ability to integrate the psychical needs of all attitude and function types is one of the bases on which the ACE sector is built, although this may have been an unconscious development of the bottom-up process of building a community organisation able to integrate people’s needs.
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IN: Ben, you know if you don’t want to go ahead with this you can stop at any point and you can refuse to answer any question at all. You can just press the button to stop the tape or just indicate that you’d like to finish. OK?

BEN: Yes.

IN: Can you tell me a bit about yourself, like where you were born and about your family?

BEN: OK. Well I’m thirty five years of age. Was born overseas in Malta and my parents migrated to Australia when I was six years old. My - I had no knowledge of English at that point. I started off then going to primary school like a normal child, learnt English and continued from there.

I’m married, I have two children and have been with my partner/wife for the past eleven years.

IN: Excellent. OK. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

BEN: No. No brothers and sisters. I’m an only child.

IN: And do you think that made a difference to your life?

BEN: Oh, very much so.

IN: Would you have liked brothers and sisters?

BEN: Yes, I think so, although you know, when you sort of see children growing up and the squabbles they have when they’re young regarding, you know, toys and possessions. I think the benefits that when they’re adults very much outweighs not having brothers and sisters.

IN: That’s interesting. OK.

What do you think helped make you the person you are now, things like your personality or experiences, what do you think formed you?

BEN: I suppose, you know, growing up - being an only child and not having many sort of other young children around me. I’ve got - I mean there are cousins I grew up round, younger cousins, but they were all younger than myself. So I never had any sort of like sibling type relationships with anyone and that sort of had a bit of an impact, but I’ve always - I don’t really know what I can say that made me the person I am.

IN: That’s fine. How did you feel growing up? You know in terms of yourself were you confident or shy or, you know, did you feel you were ahead of, behind or whatever?

BEN: Oh, extremely introverted, extremely shy child growing up. Was never really involved with, you know, any other like - the clique -y groups you find in schools. Very much kept to myself. You know, I do remember one - few memories I have from primary school was my Grade 3 teacher, I remember once going to my mother and asking ‘if everything was all right with David because he just sort of doesn’t get involved in anything’ - like during lunch times and that. So I thought that really sort of sums up my growing up.

IN: Do you think that was because you weren’t used to mixing with children, the language, any other factors that you haven’t mentioned.

BEN: I don’t think the language was an issue. But - yes being not growing up with other children was definitely sort of a big impact, a huge impact.

IN: And do Maltese people speak only Maltese or English and Maltese at home?

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BEN: English and Maltese.

IN: So that made a bit of a difference you think?

BEN: Not really, not from my growing up. I don’t think I can remember that far back. But, you know, as a sort of culture, English is basically taught in the Maltese schools and to some extent it’s probably taking over the language.

IN: But you didn’t actually speak it when you were in Malta?

BEN: No, not at all.

IN: No, not at all? It’s just that Maltese people like yourself seem to take to English really well, you know. I’ve noticed a lot of people have difficulty making the jump, but people like your own parents, you know, they don’t have an accent or anything. English seems to come to them naturally doesn’t it?

BEN: Well they knew - my parents spoke English because it was fairly widely used within the country. But being so young - I probably, you know, I can’t remember how I was at five or six but I probably knew a few words here and there. It sort of gets mixed into the Maltese language with their history with the British colony, there was a lot of British influence within the country. So - it sort of mixed, you know, into the culture somewhat and so my parents knew English although not fairly fluently. It was something that was already established in the country more since then, you know, but things have changed.

IN: What about secondary school?

BEN: For me? OK. In what sense?

IN: Well where did you go, how long did you spend there and how did you feel about it?

BEN: OK. Well from primary school I - up to Grade 5 I went to State school, primary school, and I was really happy there but the only alternative to high school at that point was Brunswick High School which had a bad reputation there, late 70’s, early 80’s. My parents decided it wouldn’t be a good idea for me to sort of go into that realm. So from being growing up in a State school then was switched in Grade 6 to a Catholic school for one year so that it’d be easier for the transition to be able to go to a Catholic high school. So I hated my Grade 6 year because I’d left all my friends behind and all of a sudden was thrown into a completely different culture of schooling. And so from there I was slipped into Cathedral College in East Melbourne from Year 7 up to Year 10. Which meant that everyday going to school, I had to travel from West Brunswick to East Melbourne. Which was a bit of a shock to the system but, you know, you grow up with that and that was - and I didn’t mind that school. I actually quite - had, you know, made a lot of good friends there and quite enjoyed my time there. Although, you know, looking back at it now, I wish they had a different curriculum than their heavily maths and science and sports orientated type of culture. And once I finished Year 10 I completed Year 12 at St Joseph’s College in North Melbourne which I particularly did not like. So - No. I did not enjoy my final two years of schooling.

IN: What was the reason? Was it the subjects, the actual culture of the school, the kids?

BEN: It was all males. All through the high school years from Year 7 up to Year 12 they were.

IN: Would you have preferred going to a mixed school? Just as a matter of interest. What do you think?

BEN: I’d probably think I would be better off if I - you know, I can’t really say from experience, but I think it would be better. I think it takes away a lot of the shyness you
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might have, with the opposite sex let’s say, in later years, you know. And you seem - it’s a mixed group, you’re not only associated with one type of people but - Why I disliked it, why I didn’t really like my final two years of high school was - the sort of culture of the school and the subjects. The school was heavily sports, science and math’s orientated and there was no leeway for really anything else. They only had a few sort of subjects within the curriculum for people like, which were really considered outside the normal type of thing - so.

IN: So you mean, sort of creative?

BEN: There was no - Yeah. There was - they did hold a couple of subjects under the creative spell (?) like which was - like I was never big on the math’s and science and never really took my interest, you know, to study so forth. So I didn’t fit into that realm and I wasn’t big on the sporting field, so I didn’t fit into that realm. So really they had a very little niche that they could put these people in, all the rest of the people in. But they were sort of considered as, I don’t know, abnormal would be the correct word, but you didn’t fit into the normal structure so you weren’t.

IN: A bit alienated from the school culture.

BEN: Very much so. Yes, very much so. And you know, and that was a shame because I did get a little taste of, you know, subjects that I really, really enjoyed and excelled in. But they had no further way that you can expand and develop on that.

IN: And I know in the past you’ve mentioned the fact that you’ve worn glasses. And do you reckon that’s had a big impact on your life? Because, you know, the story of you being a prem. baby and - do you think that’s impacted?

BEN: I think so. Very much. When they say that children can be cruel, and they can, and I was teased for many, many years for wearing glasses. And the technology, you know, twenty years ago was different than it is now and they try to make the lens as thin as possible. And I’m very short sighted and - something I have to live with and something I cannot improve but may get worse through age. And - Yes, I think that it had a sort of big impact especially as it’s being primary school where you do get teased and at high school as well. So - Yes, I do think that had an impact.

IN: Because they were - the glasses themselves were more than just a normal little pair of glasses. Is that what you’re saying?

BEN: That’s right. Yeah. They were they - when growing up they were - plus, you know, I was always given plastic lenses which were thicker than the glass lenses. So they did stick out more than say a common type reading glasses or glasses you’d wear if you were watching a movie or just something to slip on because you just needed that extra little clarity.

IN: Yeah. This was because you were a prem. baby, wasn’t it?

BEN: I believe so. I believe the idea behind it - because I was over two months prem. I was put into the isolator and in a little hospital in Malta. That, I don’t know if it was many hospitals practices, but they didn’t cover the eyes which seems to have damaged the retinas to some extent or slowed down the development of the retina. So it was a combination of both, a combination of the eyes weren’t fully developed and a combination of being placed under lights without covers.

IN: It’s a lovely story if you think about it, you know. The image of you being this teeny prem. baby, you know. The father, your father could put his wedding ring up your arm or something. Is that right?

BEN: Yes, he used to apparently. There are no photos but I was so small that I used to be able to basically fit into someone’s hand.
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IN: That’s incredible, isn’t it?
BEN: And survived.
IN: So that’s a plus. Certainly better than the alternative.
BEN: That’s a plus. That’s right. There is no real alternative.
IN: OK. Now. When or how or where did you find out about ACE? You know, when I say ACE, you know, Adult Community Education.
BEN: Well really I found out from yourself, knowing that you have worked in ACE for many, many years. And it was - and I knew it existed but it was never. Until I changed careers in the year 2000 and got involved in studying in ACE that I, you know, was really made aware of the impact that ACE could have in the community.
IN: OK. How would you have described it when you first became involved? Different or the same to other types of schooling or what was different about it?
BEN: Well I’d never - Having worked for about fifteen years straight out of school, straightout of high school, basically moved into a career not changing for fifteen years and then suddenly leaving. That not, I’d never sort of previously to that attended university or TAFEs or any other type of education facility, apart from high school. I didn’t know any different, so when I went to ACE I hadn’t gone to sort of any other universities or anything. So I didn’t really know what differences it could be, but one thing I remember is being, it was like, being sort of welcomed into that environment, you know. It’s like somebody having been there with, you know, open arms and, you know, giving you the confidence to come in. So that was really good.
IN: And do you think it’s the same now - because it’s been what, four years or something?
BEN: Yes, to some extent. Yeah. I don’t think that part of it has changed very much, you know. I think to some extent that it’s still the same.
IN: Do you think it’s the same, better, worse or how would you - what do you think in terms of change? Do you think it’s changed? In what ways?
BEN: The only way I think it - well part of the way I think it changed. Which is really from something, you know, this may be true or may not be true, it’s just my own perception of it, is that the way the funding structure to ACE organisations and what ACE organisations can run and can’t run, I think is changing the way they operate. And I think it’s slowly, slowly starting to move away from that community, very community orientated organisation. Being changed more towards how the bigger TAFEs and the big universities sort of look at their students. Where, you know, you’re a student, you do your work and, you know, you complete your course and then you leave. There’s a lot of that sort of personal contact, which is, you know, what I think makes ACE what it is, is slowly being diminished.
IN: Thank you. How would you describe a TAFE? If I said, you know, what’s a TAFE?
BEN: OK. A TAFE is - I would describe a TAFE - a looking at sort of the way an ACE organisation is run but expanding it by a few hundred times or a few million times even. In the sense of size and volume and what they can run and at the same time - maybe because of the amount of volume that they have in student-wise. You don’t have that maybe same personal contact that you would have within an ACE organisation.
IN: So sort of size makes a difference?
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BEN: I think so. I think the amount of volume of students that they have going in and I think
the age of the students too, from my experience of TAFE, is that there’s a lot of school
leavers from VCE or Year 10. They, I don’t think they know about ACE courses very
much and if you know, these big universities or TAFE colleges seem to be sort of the
next step without then - and because maybe they don’t know there are alternatives so
they just feed into these big places. And I think that sort of makes a difference that’s
creating a huge volume that goes into the TAFE and universities.

IN: What do you like about ACE?

BEN: I like - There’s many things I like about ACE and the thing that sort of gets me is
because the way I felt welcomed when I started studying back in ACE, and I try to
relay that to my current students now. And not to be sort of seen as if you’ve got twenty
people in here and you try to add a little bit more personal aspect to the people that you
meet in ACE. And I think that’s one of the things that sort of I like more than anything
else. It’s like a little community working together, I mean, like any community it
doesn’t always run smoothly and, you know, there are a lot of bumps. But I think
people still feel that, you know, ACE organisations are smaller than TAFE colleges and
universities, that they try and keep that small personal aspect still going.

IN: Good. What don’t you like?

BEN: The thing that I don’t like about ACE currently is I’m seeing these bureaucratic decisions
coming in from higher organisations that, or the people that determine what ACE
organisations can run or can’t run. And sort of putting these sort of demographics within
the organisation and that sort of reminds me a lot with my banking career. How people
were sort of pigeon-holed into, you know, for the bank’s profit seeking aspects although,
you know, ACE organisations don’t need to make a profit. I can see it sort of creeping into the system where people are being pigeon-holed and that, you know, you
must target more of these people, you must run this course, to meet this demographic.
There seems to be a lot of these political innuendoes seeping into it, depending on what’s
favourable by what ministers and what government is in at the time.

IN: And can you think of any ideas for what ACE could be doing to make itself better in
some way? Have you got any ideas for improvement?

BEN: I think, I think, you know, the way ACE can - not improve - is maybe take a look at
some of these changes that may be coming in and looking back maybe ten, fifteen years
ago and just sort of reminding themselves what an ACE organisation is there for.

IN: Good. Good. And can I get you to think about when you were a student here, because
you’ve filled a number of roles in this organisation, so I’m lucky in that I can ask you a
whole range of different questions.

BEN: OK. Well I’ve done quite a few things in ACE, most of my sort of studies after leaving
work were done in ACE. I completed the Certificate II in Information Technology. I
was also involved as a student in Diploma in Further Education and I completed the
Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training and Certificate IV in Business
Administration.

IN: Excellent. Excellent. Was there any reason that you chose ACE and not TAFE for a
couple of these courses? Because a couple of them are offered in both. Maybe not
Diploma of Further Ed. but Business Admin. and Workplace Training certainly are
offered in TAFE. Is it, you know, what would be the main reason?

BEN: Well really it was more because I was sort of given the opportunity to study the
Certificate II in Information Technology and get involved in the Diploma of Further Ed.
And, you know, being an employee throughout the ACE organisations and I saw no
reason after that why I should go to any other type of institution to do any studies
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because the outcome is exactly the same. You know I don’t get anything extra, in fact I probably get less, if you attend the larger TAFE. So there was no need to change.

IN: So you’ve pathwayed in and out, haven’t you. You’ve been to ACE, you’ve gone off to TAFE, you’ve come back to ACE. Is that your pathway?

BEN: That’s right. Yes. After completing the Certificate II in IT and during the Diploma of Further Ed. I went and studied for a year at Kangan Batman TAFE and did Certificate IV in IT Multimedia course, and full time throughout Kangan.

IN: And what do you think attracts people to ACE centres?

BEN: I think size is one thing because you’re not as big, the organisations aren’t as big, as say going to Kangan or RMIT or NMIT, I think that’s a big welcoming card to a lot of people, that you’re seen more as a person and not just a student number. And I mean that could have it’s drawbacks as well. But I think that’s one of the call cards and you can - because you can do so many different types of studies at ACE organisations as well, that it’s easier to be doing one thing and then for a student to decide ‘Oh OK, I might as well study something a little bit different’ and do that still within the same organisation, still probably knowing the same people and sometimes still studying with the same students.

IN: So that’s pathwaying, but within your comfort zone.

BEN: Exactly. I think the size does make a lot of difference to a lot of people.

IN: Now think about yourself as a staff member, because I know you’ve pathwayed from being a student to being a staff member. Why do, or I’ve got did, why do you work for ACE?

BEN: Because of that sort of relationship that I had as a student with ACE when I was, you know, sort of welcomed in to the studying. And that sort of appealed to me so much that, you know, I thought that’s something that I could sort of give back. And I was really, really happy with that. So that’s why I decided to, you know, as a student I sort of saw the benefits of ACE, how it could benefit students and I just, you know, really liked that aspect and thought that I could give something back.

IN: I know you worked for three different ACE organisations. Have you ever worked for a TAFE or university as well?

BEN: The only other place I’ve worked for in education is - I did some - I did a contract for a private training organisation which, you know, that I call these corporate training organisations and was offered to sort of - The program I did with them was something sort of similar to what ACE could be. I didn’t like the way they did their sort of training structures, you know, very corporate based, very business based. But I was offered some time to actually do some on-site training IT, on-site IT training, for, I remember that was 175 mainly male orientated students and that was good because it wasn’t sort of being in the sort of corporate classroom. But it was out on-site where you were there where the people worked and being around their environment. So it gave it a little bit more personal aspect.

IN: Would you say it was very different to working in ACE?

BEN: Oh extremely different. Although the courses they covered were the same, the subjects and courses were the same, it was extremely different because it was - the corporate training seemed to revolve more around profit and funds. I mean these people, the organisations, were there as a business and was there to make a profit. So I think education, although that’s what they were there for, came secondary. And it was more like having these students come in, who their employers pay a significant sum of money

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360 for them, to be there for a day. I’m not saying that they didn’t learn anything. The
361 aspect was to give these students a really good time, a really good day. Give them
362 chocolates, give them cappuccinos, take them out to lunch. You know, these people,
363 students would then go back to their employers and say how great it was attending; you
364 know, the education centre and obviously their employer would fork out the necessary
365 funds to send these students back. Now I’m not saying they didn’t learn anything
366 during that day but - and they did. And you know, the teachers there did put, you
367 know, are good trainers. I’m not saying that but I think sometimes the education part of
368 the business came second.

369 IN: To the money making?

370 BEN: To the money making. Yes.

371 IN: OK. Look. I’ve already asked you the other questions here about change so I’ll leave
372 those and perhaps just ask you a couple of questions about IT, because you’re involved
373 in IT. Can you describe what IT was available when you started in ACE, in terms of the
374 people, the courses or the equipment? If you think it’s any different to now or if you can
375 just give me an overview if you think it similar.

376 BEN: I think it was rather similar. I know that over the years, you know, at Moreland Adult
377 we have gotten - we have greatly improved the amount of computers that we have and
378 up-graded and, you know, and established a lot more IT equipment within the
379 organisations. But I don’t think it’s changed very significantly - or a huge change.

380 IN: In terms of the emphasis on it?

381 BEN: Oh, it’s always been important - if not I think maybe - it’s always been important when
382 I started and I think over the last four years I think IT courses have, I don’t know,
383 maybe increased slightly but I can’t really, you know -

384 IN: Did you notice a big difference when you were in say the TAFE or other mainstream
385 educational sectors with the IT? Either the set-up, the equipment, whatever, you know,
386 compared with ACE. If you think of ACE and others.

387 BEN: Oh. Yes. I think there is a big difference and primarily when it goes down to the
388 funds. You know, when I was involved with the corporate training organisations the
389 equipment was never an issue. I mean they were - the students who came and attended
390 all worked on lap tops, all had the latest software, the latest operating systems. They
391 had, the trainers were equipped with, you know, overheads, you know attached to their
392 lap top in each classroom so that they could demonstrate what they were doing. So the
393 equipment was never a problem because of the amount of money they had. And that
394 sort of was when I did attend TAFE then that sort of started getting a little bit less.
395 Although the TAFE I attended, Kangan, had all the equipment that was needed but I
396 wouldn’t say state-of-the-art equipment. And their computer set-up was not any
397 different to any other ACE organisation I’ve attended. The only difference would be
398 because the emphasis was on multimedia during this course and they obviously needed
399 some other equipment that you may not find in everyday sort of ACE organisations to
400 carry out that course.

401 BEN: Like software or hardware?

402 IN: Software would be one obviously. If you’re going to study multimedia or run
403 multimedia, you’re going to need the software to facilitate that when you’re working
404 with
405 images, working with video, working with sound, with publishing. So you need the
406 software to be able to maintain that. Not only the software but you need computers that
407 are sort of powerful enough to maintain running that software. And also that’s
408 where the hardware comes into it. You not only need the software, you also need the
409 hardware to be able to facilitate them. Some other hardwares which were required at

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that stage when we worked on video editing although they didn’t have professional, you know, video sort of set-ups as you’d maybe find in some specialist courses. You still needed hardware like a video camera and then you needed the hardware, you know, on the computer, or attached to the computer, to be able to transfer video from video camera to computer. Then you needed the software to be able to do basic editing. So it was - although it wasn’t a very professional set-up - there was some sort of set-up to be able to facilitate these. As well as each classroom at TAFE also had an overhead projector for teachers to be able to demonstrate what they’re doing, which you don’t really find that equipment at ACE.

IN: Oh. That’s right because you’re trying to deliver that course but with ACE facilities, that’s the difference. So does that limit what you can offer or does it just change the way you offer it.

BEN: It changes the way you offer things. I think you try and make do with what you’ve got. And you know, part of the challenge in ACE is, you know, being able to do that and because, you know, funding is always an issue. I know one of the courses that I did through the multimedia here, is working with digital audio and working with digital audio you need the software to be able to work with that. And sometimes even hardware to be able to work with that. So instead of knowing probably we couldn’t probably afford to buy the software to run the course, well then I used thirty day trial software from the companies that manufacture them and, you know. So there are ways of working round, you just have to.

IN: You have to be creative and flexible.

BEN: Exactly, exactly. You know, I do wish some times that all the organisations I work with would be, you know, make things so much easier sometimes having sort of an overhead projector on a computer so you can demonstrate step-by-step. You know, let’s all do this instead of running around, you know, behind each computer saying ‘no that’s left mouse button, no, no left, no right, no right, now click on this’. It’s hard to demonstrate when you have nothing to demonstrate with. But as you say it’s a challenge and you just adapt and you do with what you’ve got. It’s part of what I like about ACE too.

IN: Good. I might just change the tape now.

Second tape: Interview with BEN

David I will ask you a couple of questions now about a couple of things that not many people up here have been involved in. You’re one of the few people that have been involved in both. One is Learn Links and the other is Diploma of Further Education.

So now, what is your position in relation to Learn Links? Where do you fit into that?

BEN: Well as I - back in the year 2000 I was a student at Learn Links, or here for Learn Links, where I was - did the Certificate II in Information Technology and then down the track now I’ve become a trainer and co-ordinator. So I - so for here I sort of run the Certificate II in IT, the Certificate III in IT, the Certificate II in Business as well as sort of co-ordinating the programs, making sure all the administration is sent off to RMIT, all the reporting done for RMIT. And I also run the program for the Certificate II in Information Technology for PRACE under the same umbrella.

IN: OK. So you are a teacher in it and you started out as a student in it.

BEN: Yes. That’s correct.

IN: So you’ve got a good spread - and also you do the admin. for it so you’ve got a really good spread.

OK. Have you found it a positive or negative experience and why?

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BEN: A little bit of both. Unfortunately when it comes - OK. Let me split it up. As a - I think as a student, because I can look at it sort of separately and having been a student myself, is - there was a lot of flaws in the program when I did the Certificate II in Information Technology. Although I do believe it was still I think it’s second year that it was run, I think it started here in 1999, so it was only the second time the program was run here and there was still a lot of faults. I do remember one thing that Janeen, who was a student at that time, still joke about is that one of the subjects, which was ‘Creating a Spreadsheet’, was that we had to create a spreadsheet that did - worked out loan repayments. And coming from a banking background I picked up that all their formulas were incorrect. And I remember then we had to let RMIT know that - ‘hello, you know, these formulas aren’t working they’re actually incorrect’. We still have a little bit of a joke about that.

IN: And that was an on-line course, wasn’t it? The materials were on-line, or were they?

BEN: Well I wouldn’t call it - although RMIT like to call it an on-line course - I wouldn’t call it an on-line course as such. Because what you do is, you log on to RMIT’s web-site and what you actually get on-line is - you download the lessons and for to be able to sort just the lessons on that but then you just print those out and have them by sight. So you’re not actually working on-line, you submit no material on-line back to RMIT. So students actually do the assessments with me. I correct it, I keep it, I do all that sort of relevant stuff to it. So on-line is not really a good way of putting it, the course.

IN: So it’s more off-site?

BEN: Off-site.

IN: Yes. Is that how you’d describe it?

BEN: Very much so. It’s off-site yet at the same time you can log on to a web-site to obtain the lesson documents. Which in some instances, you know, that causes more trouble than anything else. And in a lot of cases I actually have the documents copied and in some instances the students don’t go on-line at all because of the problems RMIT have with students being able to go on-line. And, you know, because of the administration faults or problems that RMIT have and the way students are sort of asked to log on-line is, they’re issued with the student number once they enroll through RMIT and then they use the student number to actually log on. And once they log on they have the subjects which they enrolled in and can actually get the lessons for those subjects. But unfortunately the amount of time that it does take for students to obtain a student number, which could be sometimes months down the track, you can’t expect students to be waiting for months before they can actually start the course. So I let them use my log in or actually have the documents for them. So in a sense students really aren’t participating on-line because they’re not using their own sort of on-line log ins, because of the amount of time it takes them to get back. And when they do get it some of them don’t work anyway, which is also a problem.

IN: So is that the negative?

BEN: That’s one of the negatives - that’s one of the negatives and - going back to sort of what I was saying before with like as a student being, you know, finding these faults and using these documents. And being now that was in 2001, now we’re at the end of 2004, nothing much has been changed with these documents to improve a lot of these faults. And I think that that’s really one of the major drawbacks with it is that these documents in four years time have not greatly been improved, although they have had some changes, but no significant changes.

BEN: The lessons are still written for let’s say one of the - one of the subjects - which is ‘Operate a Personal Computer’, which works on using Windows operating system. It’s still written for Windows 95 which is basically an obsolete operating system in many
instances and so. And then you’ve got, you know, the organisations that are running
the
course and obviously they’re trying to keep up-to-date and updating their operating
systems to something like, you know, Windows 98 or Windows XP. Students having
these lessons which is still for an older operating system, that’s one of the greatest
drawbacks.
And I think that RMIT are promoting this as an on-line course, you’d think within the
four year period they could have actually tried to make some sort of effort to try to
establish more on-line materials for students. Not just being able to download the
lessons and download some of the files. I’m not saying there hasn’t been any changes
but only very, very little changes to the way that’s been set up. You know, sometimes I
wish students can log on there and actually work, you know, their lessons bit by bit on-
line, something I’ve seen done with say on a CD-ROM (not for RMIT). That students
can actually work with the lesson and actually participate with the software at the same
time. And being told, ‘yes, you type this here’ and not just reading, which anybody can
do, and then follow, you know, Step 1, Step 2. So that’s one of the drawbacks with it.
Another drawback which I never really thought about but it’s only been made to my
attention recently, is that because I’ve sort of been looking at these documents since, you
know, the year 2000, you sort of become a bit complacent with - you get used to, you
know, what the lessons outline and what the assessment tasks outline. And recently here
at Moreland Adult Education had a moderation session where we actually used
RMIT assessments and lessons as moderating some of the IT material. And someone,
two people, at the moderation, who had nothing to do with the Certificate II in IT
through RMIT, made the comment or asked if students actually do have trouble
understanding the way the lessons have been typed. Talking about the grammar and the
language that was associated and thinking back, and thinking of what problem the
student has, I thought, yes, that’s another problem. It’s that some of the jargon that’s
used within the lessons and the way they’re actually written can be very complicated to
understand.

IN: You mean in terms of people with non-English speaking background or not as high
literacy levels or whatever?

BEN: Not only those people. I think those people would be greatly disadvantaged because I
think that the curriculum documents for the course could have actually been written a
lot simpler when it comes to, you know, the English language towards it. But also I
think that the way they’ve written it is that they expect people to already have a good
grasp of the topics already. And just using these lessons just sort of a little polisher, just
to add the icing on the top. And people who, you know, have a limited knowledge of IT
and then want to come in to do this, I think the lessons, they find the lessons extremely
confusing because of the way, you know, they’re written. The step-by-step instructions I
think were written by people who were - had so much experience in that field that, yes,
they could understand them and probably their peers could easily understand them. But

BEN: I don’t think they were actually maybe given to someone who had only limited IT
experience to be able to read these documents and have an understanding.

IN: And yet there are no pre-requisites are there, with the course?

BEN: No. No.

IN: It would be different if you had to complete a preliminary.

BEN: That’s right. Being at a Certificate II level there is no pre-requisite so you expect
people from very little IT skills. You would not expect someone to have no IT skills to
be doing the course at all. But being able to turn a computer on and fiddle round and
have a play with, let’s say Solitaire, and maybe typed a few words here and there in
word processing. Just normal, I call it just home based entertaining computer use. Just
something you’d go on just as a hobby, then trying to change that hobby into, you
know, something a little bit more solid. That’s all I’d sort of really expect of
people. And - but I think it’s the way the documentation has been written, those people
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sometimes do struggle immensely to actually understand the lessons. Let’s see if there’s
any more faults.

IN: What about from an admin. point of view? Now you’re the person who does a lot of the
admin. both here and at Preston and so you’d be one of the few people who sort of picks
up on anything good or bad in the admin. system.

BEN: I can’t say there is actually anything good within the administration. I think it’s very
poorly administered on the RMIT side. And, you know, the amount of support that the
me, as representing the ACE organisation get is very, very limited. And sometimes -
you feel you’re doing your documents and paperwork just to keep someone happy at
RMIT. Sometimes it’s more of a challenge and I think part of the problem was - is that
when I started, when I got involved in the program as a student then as a teacher, there
was one person at RMIT that sort of took over the administration for the program and
everything went in to this one person, enrollments, statistics, results. And if there was
any problems this one person would get back to you and, you know, ask any questions.
Or if you had a problem you’d get in contact with this person. Then, in 2003 I think it
was, this person had left RMIT. And RMIT employed another person who came up with
a whole restructure of the enrolments, results. Administration was all sent in and
documented for RMIT. Which you know, initially on paper it may have looked good
and what they wanted to achieve may have sounded and looked good. I think they
wanted to give themselves a little bit less work at RMIT, in the sense that because
they’ve got so many departments and so many people working in these. Learn Links,
it’s only just a small part, a minute part, to what the amount of people and courses at
RMIT run. So I think they wanted to structure like enrolments directly to go to
enrolment section, results to go directly to the result section and then -

IN: You mean instead of to Learn Links?

BEN: Instead of to Learn Links - to directly associate the paperwork that was necessary to
these other separate departments.

IN: Right. So you were dealing with Learn Links and the departments. Is that what you’re
saying?

BEN: That’s correct. Yes.

IN: So that’s how many departments?

BEN: So you’d have Learn Links as the department, enrolments as another department, then
you had results I think. I don’t even know who ends up with the results. I think that
goes through Learn Links but then if you needed to order Statements of Attainments or
Full Certificates then they had to go through another department. I think they were dealing
with a multiple of people through RMIT and part of the problem is that duplicate
paperwork was being sent in. So, for example, a simple thing as somebody coming in
enrolling in one subject, you would then have to you know ?, then fax the - design
these tracking sheets to try to keep track of what students are doing, where they’re
enrolled, what subjects they’re enrolled in. These were then faxed to Learn Links then
this information was posted or faxed to enrolments department. And then if you had,
you know - and once these people they’ve completed their subjects and you wanted for
them either to get a Statement of Attainment or a Full Certificate, you then had to send
that information on to another department. While you know, sometimes it wouldn’t be
much effort for these departments to communicate I think.

BEN: One of the things that’s really frustrating to me doing this work is that I don’t think
these departments communicate. Sometimes all it would take is a phone call from one
department to another department to say ‘hey, can you fax me this information or email
me this information from Moreland or PRACE’. They just don’t communicate. Which
means they come back to the provider and want this information that may have already
been sent.

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IN: So it goes from you to Learn Links, to the department, then either back to you or back to Learn Links and back to you again, if something goes wrong.

BEN: It could. Yeah. And I don’t think there is any sort of set structure with or - Look I can understand to a point where, you know, RMIT have had a lot of staff changes especially within the Learn Links department. And the people that we have, or I have as a contact, they’ve gone through, they’re on their fourth person this year. Which doesn’t help. Doesn’t help RMIT but it also is very frustrating for people on our end and that, you know. All of a sudden things change and I don’t think they communicate back to - back to the providers such as myself. There is a change at RMIT, hey, it wouldn’t hurt to say ‘hey, this person has now gone, please send all relevant material to this person’. Not I might find out six months later that the person is no longer there. So sometimes, you know, the providers are sort of like left in the background. Or, you know, RMIT think, well these people aren’t coming to RMIT, they mustn’t be as good. And although that’s never really probably said openly, I think that it is a perception that sort of goes around. Especially when, you know, they just don’t think that you’ve got anything to do so they will ask you for these reports not, not sort of considering, well hey, you know, you’ve got as much probably paperwork and administration to do regarding other things and actually training the students and stuff like that.

IN: So do you think it’s a perception of theirs that ACE is different?

BEN: Oh definitely. I think through RMIT’s eyes and I think probably through a lot of large TAFEs is that ACE is seen like, as the bottom of the barrel education. And, hey, these people aren’t coming to RMIT, they mustn’t be as good. And although that’s never really probably said openly, I think that it is a perception that sort of goes around. Especially when, you know, they just don’t think that you’ve got anything to do so they will ask you for these reports not, not sort of considering, well hey, you know, you’ve got as much probably paperwork and administration to do regarding other things and actually training the students and stuff like that.

One of the other biggest problems is that all - it’s the amount of money that RMIT gives the providers back for running these courses. And I think that sort of comes back to them saying, well they’re not as good as a TAFE. Such as that they only pay $2.70 for every student contact hour for delivering anywhere between 2000-3000 hours, it works out nearly two thirds less than what you would running it under ACFE instead of RMIT. So that does have a big impact.

IN: Did you know ACFE pays what is considered a low rate at $6.11 for the same thing, $6.11 going up to $6.19 next year. Did you know that? The same course, the same units, the same everything.

BEN: That’s correct and you know, unfortunately that’s - I think RMIT should open their eyes to that. I don’t know how they expect, you know, the providers to be able to survive. And I know for FRACE last year, when we did run the course, they ran it as a huge loss. But you know, they weren’t thinking of that, they were thinking of, you know, getting the students through the subjects. And as here at Moreland as well, with $2.70 student contact hour for delivering anywhere between 2000-3000 hours, it works out nearly two thirds less than what you would running it under ACFE instead of RMIT. So that does have a big impact.

IN: Do you think it has a future, Learn Links?

BEN: I hope it has a future, I really do because - But, you know, the way things are going I think they have to make some huge significant changes to the way Learn Links is run. And actually have a different perception to what, you know, community education providers are there for. I do hope it has a future but, at the moment, over the last couple of years, I’m seeing it slowly, slowly diminish.

IN: Thank you. Now can you just change your hat and think about the Diploma of Further Education.

BEN: Beautiful.

IN: You’re one of the few people who has actually gone through it and you’re a successful pathway into the TAFE. I’ve asked a question on how were you, or are you, involved in
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the Diploma of Further Education and that was as a student coming in. You came in through Learn Links and did the Certificate II in IT?

BEN: That’s right. Yes.

IN: Then you enrolled in Diploma of Further Education?

BEN: Correct.

IN: To help you decide what you wanted to get into and you decided on the Certificate IV in Multimedia at Kangan, although I think you also applied to RMIT.

BEN: That’s correct. That’s right.

IN: Am I right in that you got an offer from both places?

BEN: Yes, I did. I can’t remember the exact name of the course I enrolled through RMIT. It was more to do with the engineering side of the computer industry. Which relied heavily on working on mathematics and since mathematics weren’t sort of my big strong point in high school, I was, you know, a bit apprehensive of actually studying that.

So my main forte was to be more on the creative side and actually doing the multimedia and that’s where I sort of fed into at Kangan.

IN: OK. So when you were at Moreland doing the Diploma of Further Ed., how did you find out that it existed? Because you were here as an existing student, or did you see/read something about it or - ?

BEN: Because I was here as an existing student. It was because I had sort of finished my employment under the banking industry. Through word of mouth I’d learnt that, you know, as I said before, I didn’t know much about ACE organisations prior to that. So it was mainly word of mouth that, you know, there is something available, you know, I was very - I had no idea what to do. I knew I wanted to study and I knew I had to do something to get away from the banking industry, because that’s really all I sort of knew. And yes, it would have been really easy to sort of get out of one financial institution and easily step into another role in a different financial institution. But being, you know, needing - needing I think to change careers completely - I had no knowledge of how one would do that, being out of the school system for so long. And so, you know, through word of mouth I did learn that, you know, ACE organisations - there is, you know, Moreland Adult Education and, you know, they’re an education facility. And through them I learnt through the, you know, what the Diploma of Further Ed. was and that, you know, learnt about the Certificate II in IT.

IN: And would you say the Diploma of Further Education is a different course to any other thing you’ve come across in ACE?

BEN: Because I was here as an existing student. It was because I had sort of finished my employment under the banking industry. Through word of mouth I’d learnt that, you know, as I said before, I didn’t know much about ACE organisations prior to that. So it was mainly word of mouth that, you know, there is something available, you know, I was very - I had no idea what to do. I knew I wanted to study and I knew I had to do something to get away from the banking industry, because that’s really all I sort of knew. And yes, it would have been really easy to sort of get out of one financial institution and easily step into another role in a different financial institution. But being, you know, needing - needing I think to change careers completely - I had no knowledge of how one would do that, being out of the school system for so long. And so, you know, through word of mouth I did learn that, you know, ACE organisations - there is, you know, Moreland Adult Education and, you know, they’re an education facility. And through them I learnt through the, you know, what the Diploma of Further Ed. was and that, you know, learnt about the Certificate II in IT.

IN: And did you find the lack of structure positive or negative?

BEN: Because I was here as an existing student. It was because I had sort of finished my employment under the banking industry. Through word of mouth I’d learnt that, you know, as I said before, I didn’t know much about ACE organisations prior to that. So it was mainly word of mouth that, you know, there is something available, you know, I was very - I had no idea what to do. I knew I wanted to study and I knew I had to do something to get away from the banking industry, because that’s really all I sort of knew. And yes, it would have been really easy to sort of get out of one financial institution and easily step into another role in a different financial institution. But being, you know, needing - needing I think to change careers completely - I had no knowledge of how one would do that, being out of the school system for so long. And so, you know, through word of mouth I did learn that, you know, ACE organisations - there is, you know, Moreland Adult Education and, you know, they’re an education facility. And through them I learnt through the, you know, what the Diploma of Further Ed. was and that, you know, learnt about the Certificate II in IT.

IN: And did you find the lack of structure positive or negative?

BEN: Oh, definitely, definitely. It’s got its own structure in the sense it’s not like sitting down doing lessons and not, you know, you would do in an IT based structure. Or having, you know, a trainer or a teacher at the front of the class saying, now we do this, now we do this. It’s - it’s more tailored to each individual person that sort of attends the Diploma of Further Education. Because it is a bridging course to help people get back into, or, you know, apply for courses, within either universities or other TAFE institutions that aren’t being covered by ACE organisations or known ACE organisations. That it’s each student then although, you know, there is very similarities. I think it’s tailored to each student depending on what they want to achieve from the Diploma of Further Education. What their next stepping stone would be to - yeah, it is completely unlike anything I’ve come across.
BEN: Positive. There is a structure, I mean, don’t get me wrong when I say -

IN: Well there is underneath I know, but people sometimes come in and they think there doesn’t seem to be. It’s actually an accredited course so there is a curriculum. But it’s more the way it’s delivered, isn’t it?

BEN: That’s right. It’s the way it’s sort of presented and I think that’s a good thing and because when you see - although you don’t know sometimes why you’re doing things for, because of that, you know. It’s not black and white like a lot of other courses that are sort of run, where you do this, and this, and this, and you end up with this. But at the end - It’s, I think it’s at the end of the year you see the outcomes of attending classes. It’s when, you know, you’ve got your portfolios put together and your documents submitted to enrol in institutions or wherever you want to get out of it.

That’s where you see the benefits of the whole year. It all sort of comes together. It’s like a huge jigsaw that’s completed at the end.

IN: That’s a good way to describe it. Do you think the course - well, if you had to describe it as a course, would you call it an ACE course or a TAFE course? If you had to sort of just give it one of those names.

BEN: Oh definitely ACE. I think because of that personal relationship that I’ve mentioned several times here that, you know, that ACE organisations do portray, or to me they portray. You couldn’t achieve the same thing within a larger TAFE network. It’s very much, very much what an ACE organisation is, and it’s what really got me coming back to ACE is the Diploma of Further Ed.

IN: Do you think it has a future, the course?

BEN: Oh definitely. I think it’s one of those things that it’s always going to be required. I mean, there’s going to be people out there that need a career change because of for any circumstances. There’s people out there that maybe have been out of the school system for quite some time. Have got, you know, maybe social, language disadvantages. Not everybody, you know, it’s very much that not everybody fits to a peg, you know. And I think the Diploma of Further Education, you know, helps these, extremely helps these people, you know, fit into this peg, and then continue with their studies.

IN: If you could change the course, what would you do?

BEN: I don’t think I would.

IN: OK.

BEN: I don’t think there’s anything to change in it.

IN: OK. Was there anything extra you’d like to say about anything we’ve talked about, or anything to do with ACE, or education, or anything you want to ask me?

BEN: The only thing I do hope is, you know, is that ACE organisation, I think I mentioned before, is that, you know, I hope ACE doesn’t turn into the same demographics as what TAFE sort of, are sort of seen upon by students. And at the same time, you know, I do hope that these people that make the high decisions don’t sort of see ACE as being sort of like the fallback education sort of system, where people are not wanted within like the TAFE sort of system. And you know, those - and I don’t like to pigeonhole people and I don’t like to make assumptions on people, but you know, such as like youths that don’t fit into the normal school structure. People that have maybe been socially disadvantaged or even, you know, like aboriginal community or people who’ve been within the prison system. I do hope that then, you know, these people don’t make these decisions, don’t sort of pigeonhole people as going into ACE as only those types of people.

IN: Because they’re difficult, you mean, and need a lot of support!

MJC
BEN: Difficult, and they don't fit into the normal structure, you know. Sometimes they may be sort of seen as people who need that extra helping hand. And which I think, you know, normal education places like TAFE and university could handle these types of people, I'm not saying they're problem people. It's that I hope people then aren't pigeonholed and sort of said, well, these people don't fit into TAFE because of this, this and this, well, let's stick them -

IN: Like a too hard basket.

BEN: Exactly.

IN: Not just support and need. But just they're hard so just send to ACE. Is that what you're saying?

BEN: Exactly right, exactly. Well I do hope that sort of ACE continues to be delivering courses that are equal and if not better than some based to TAFE college.

IN: Well thank you, Ben.

BEN: Thank you.

Finish
IN: Interview with Biddy the 22nd of December

………you know you don’t have to answer any questions. You can stop at any time or turn the tape off.

BIDDY: Are we OK now? Good. Great. We might have a flute and a tram and a few other -

IN: A bit of noise, yes. I’m recording but I’ll take some notes anyway. It’s OK with me. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself if you want to? You can always not answer, you know that. Maybe where you were born or about your family. If that’s OK?

BIDDY: OK. I was born in Gippsland, but left there when I was just over one. So I never think of myself as coming from the country, as my family moved then to Cheltenham, a suburb in Melbourne. And I spent most of my childhood and adolescence there.

Going to the local Catholic primary school for the first six or seven years. And then to Kilbreda College for my secondary schooling. So that’s probably the most significant influences in my life.

That my father was a post master. So I never lived in a normal house or a normal community. I lived in this rather strange post office world. And very much a Catholic world at that time, but with a very - Just recently, this year, I was asked to speak at the Centenary of my school, under the topic of ‘Kilbreda Girls Grow Up’. And it gave me an opportunity to think what I learnt in my secondary school days, at that school.

And I was really surprised to see how many of the values that I now hold, go back to those days.

IN: Is that a - that’s a private school or a church run Catholic school? And all girls, was it?

BIDDY: All girls. Yes. And that was significant. Yes. And all women staff. So it was a completely female community. Completely.

IN: That’s interesting. A lot of people have talked about things like that as a defining influence on their life.

BIDDY: And one of the four things I identified when I gave the talk was that implicit feminism that I learnt and saw all around me in my schooling. The other was multiculturalism. The other was social justice. And the other was a love of language and symbols and rituals.

IN: And that’s influenced you ever since, obviously.

BIDDY: I see those as being born in those days and growing stronger through my life. And it being a recurrent theme right through my life, if I look back now. It was not until I was asked to do this that I really identified the origins of some of these really important values. So -

IN: Would you have called it a privileged school or -?

BIDDY: No. It wasn’t a privileged school. The Brigidine nuns who run it, were very committed to social justice. In terms of - like it wasn’t the fees. Well, my family, probably because the family wasn’t well off, so the fees weren’t easily met. But I happened to win scholarships, so it wasn’t an issue for me. But if there were girls who couldn’t afford the fees, the nuns just looked the other way, you know. So nobody was ever turned away.

IN: Yes. Yes. Oh, that’s interesting, isn’t it?

BIDDY: We certainly had to - it was privileged in the sense of, we had to have a uniform, you know. And there were fees at a time when there were no fees in government schools, But it was a matter covering the costs. It wasn’t a money making activity at all. But it wasn’t privileged in other ways in that, for example, there was no office stream, there was no commercial stream, there was no domestic stream.

MJC
IN: That’s unusual, isn’t it?

BIDDY: It was a very academically focused school. Which suited me very well. But didn’t necessarily suit everybody.

So I suppose it was privileged in one way. In it was assumed that we were all interested in ideas, and wanted to talk about ideas. And that was encouraged.

On the other hand, I think it overlooked and it probably was quite blind to those who weren’t interested in those things. It’s something I’ve often thought since, I’d like to do a bit of research myself, how it was for the girls who didn’t find that attractive. Like my sister left after two years, for example, and went off and did an apprenticeship in hairdressing. And was much happier at Malvern Girls School.

IN: Yes. It’s funny how that happens in the family with siblings, isn’t it? Is she your only sister? Just the two girls.

BIDDY: Yes. One sister and three brothers.

IN: Oh, three brothers. I have no brothers, we’re from an all girl family. So it’s interesting that it changes the dynamics, doesn’t it? Having brothers? So they tell me.

BIDDY: Well, I think being the - I was the fourth child but the first girl. And I was absolutely adored.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: And only again, in later life, I realized that I was so welcomed when I came into this world. No matter what I said or did, it was going to be fantastic. I think it was harder for my sister, being just close behind.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: Yes. And I was named after my father’s mother. Who was an Irish woman. So not only was I the first girl, but I was the reincarnation of his dead mother I some ways. So I think that all gave me a great sense of being welcome and valued and probably did my self-esteem quite a lot of good.

IN: Brothers are often …………, often very welcoming. Because people have said that in the past.

BIDDY: Yes. Yes.

IN: You know, that boys are not seen as nurturing. But I’ve found often they’re more nurturing or just as nurturing. Aren’t they?

BIDDY: Well, I believe my third brother ran around Trafalgar, where I was born, saying ‘I’ve got a baby sister. I’ve got a baby sister’.

IN: Oh, isn’t that lovely. A good bonus.

BIDDY: So I think that is a factor. I don’t think that ………… But also my mother I think was a significant influence, again on later reflection. She left school in Grade 8. Which was normal at that time. And got her Merit, was very proud of that.

IN: Yes. That’s right.

BIDDY: But when my partner, Bill, was doing his masters some years later, he interviewed her in terms of people who’d left school and what they’d thought about that since. And she had always had a craving to go on to further study. Which she never ever did. And I think some of that was fed into me.
IN: Yes. And nowadays she probably would have.

BIDDY: She would have. And I’ll tell you what she did do, and I’ve written about this so I won’t go into a lot of detail here. She did the Dale Carnegie course in the 50’s. And I think it was her version of mature age women going back to study. Because it was quite a serious course, where she went every week. They had to do speeches, they had to do group activity. She was the only woman in fifty men. You know, I mean a gutsy thing to do.

IN: Oh, very. Yes.

BIDDY: And I think that was her struggling to actually do something where she could be stretched intellectually, would be successful intellectually. And where she would get some sort of public recognition.

IN: Because you know if you’ve got a good brain. Though in those days, maybe you didn’t get to use it.

BIDDY: Yes. So I think that was probably another influence somewhere, you know. That it’s really important to get a good education. Even though it was, I mean, it was never an issue for me. I loved school, I loved learning, I loved reading and I loved writing. So it was never an issue that I had to be kept at school. But it was never an issue either that there was anything to question about that. Although my father did say after Year 11, after Leaving, he did say ‘The bank’s a really good job. Well, you know, I don’t see why you wouldn’t go into the bank’.

IN: It was. In those days.

BIDDY: Yes. I think probably, behind the scenes, Mum said ‘No. No.’. ‘Let her go on’. You know, I think. I can’t check like.

IN: Yes. It’s a very formative thing if you think about it, using all that sort of thing. Isn’t it?

IN: Because you know if you’ve got a good brain. Though in those days, maybe you didn’t get to use it.

BIDDY: Yes. Yes.

IN: And they’re the things that, you know, I was going to ask you about. What you feel formed you. But that’s covered that. So -

BIDDY: I think what formed me was, I think, a strong sense, a strong sense social justice, tradition within the Catholic community that I knew. It’s not necessarily present in all Catholic communities.

IN: A lot of people have commented on, you know, their sibling place or, you know, the number of siblings.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: I think the Irish heritage, I won’t go on about that. But I used to love being - I never did meet my Irish grandmother, but I always had lots of imaginary conversations with her. I think, the world of literature. I was a great reader as a young one. And since my family life was quite difficult in some ways, my parents were both very unhappy. And so the world of ideas and books was a great other worlds that were open to me. And I think formed a basis of realizing the power and beauty of that inner world. And what - and the power of ideas and reflection and contemplation that came from that very early time. I think, perhaps being, yes, the first daughter was also an important influence too.
BIDDY: I think it’s very important. Yes. Very important issue.

IN: And the only children have all commented on that, you know, in a not a negative necessarily. But the lack. Yeah. They’ve felt diminished now as adults by not having any, which is interesting.

BIDDY: Yes. Yes.

IN: OK. You were very positive about your early schooling.

BIDDY: I loved schooling.

IN: OK.

BIDDY: I know you’ve got a history of some teaching positions. Haven’t you?

IN: Oh, right.

BIDDY: My first experience was as a student.

IN: Oh, right.

BIDDY: I was living in Hurstbridge which is on the northern fringes of Melbourne. In a mud brick house. With a little baby.

IN: Oh, right.

BIDDY: And I had been teaching at the local secondary school and resigned when I became a mother. And a newsletter arrived in our letterbox one day from the Diamond Valley Learning Centre. And it said, you know, ‘Are you looking for something or interested in doing something a bit different’. I’ve also written about this at another time. And I knew I didn’t want to do VCE. And I didn’t want to do art/craft courses because there were too many half finished art/craft projects around the house. But there was one called ‘Women in Australian History and Literature’. Which was co-ordinated by two women I’m still friendly with, Robyn Hartley and Diane Parsons. And it became - we met for the next three years. It became a collective group, they initiated it and then we all - it was a study group, I suppose.

IN: Yes. Yes.

BIDDY: So that was my first experience with adult education in the Diamond Valley Learning Centre. In the mid 70’s, that would have been. And from there I then - well, I had then an experience there as a student, and as a co-learner. And then we moved to Bentleigh and I remember thinking ‘Oh that women’s group I was part of in Greensborough would be fantastic if there were something like that in Bentleigh’. And there was nothing like that. But there was a community development organization called Scope there. And I thought it would be great through them, to set up a women’s, an adult education woman’s group. Commensurate with it.

So I initiated a group there modeled much the same on the Diamond Valley lines. And then - look, over a number of years, I was an adult education tutor. I was a committed member of Scope. I was a home tutor scheme tutor. I did voluntary work at the local women’s refuge, which also had an education process. I did a lot of committee work, voluntary work. I worked with the Learning Exchange newspaper at one stage, you know, writing up things. So a very wide variety of skills and roles, diverse roles.

IN: Yes. Yes.

BIDDY: And that’s interesting because I pictured you coming in as a teacher. Moving straight into ACE as an ACE teacher. From maybe a secondary background. So I obviously
haven’t read your biography or anything. *You’ll have to point to me*, point me in the
direction.

BIDDY: So I’ve had, probably for six or seven years, experience in a *whole range of roles*, in a
whole range of organizations.

IN: Yes. Yes.

BIDDY: My adult literacy tutor experience, which was again as a voluntary tutor, was at
Holmesglen TAFE. But then about early 80’s was appointed *co-ordinator* of a project
called ‘Recreation Opportunities for Migrant Women’. I preferred to call Learning
Opportunities. You known, formal and non-formal learning opportunities for
immigrant women. I was involved with that project for three or four years. So that was
really my first paid position. Working quite explicitly and directly on *creating* and
supporting and networking with all sorts of organizations committed to learning
opportunities for immigrant women. And the learning was to do with English, it was to
do with child care, it was to do with health, it was to do with working in a bureaucracy,
get to know your child’s school. A whole range. There were - about 150 groups were
in that group - all with no specific groups. So the Vietnamese speaking, the Spanish
speaking and Turkish speaking etc.
And from there I went to - Oh, there’s a few other jobs, but the next probably
significant one was the Council of Adult Education.

IN: Yes

BIDDY: Where I was *co-ordinator*. Although, by that time, the title had been changed And I
think ended up being manager of the Adult Basic Education department. Which
became the Return to Study Department. And at various times included ESL or not,
because restructure took place.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: So there my role was, I was able to bring together all my experiences to that point.
Working in the community, working as a tutor, working as a committee member,
working as a community development worker.
And in the meantime, actually I’d forgotten about that, I did my Grad. Dip. In
Community Education at Monash. And that was a two years course which was one day a
week. And everybody had to be employed in the community education sector. And we
worked out our two years study was very much based on the work we were doing. And
the work of all the others that were involved. So it was very much action research based.
And I was working on the migrant woman’s project when I did that.
So very much that experience drew me into very close encounters with issues to do with
multiculturalism, feminism, ethnicity, race, class. So you know, I brought all of those
different experiences when I came to CAE with responsibility for a whole program. As
you know the CAE program is a big program, there were about 800 students when I
arrived, and about fifty tutors.
And I must say, in Adult Community Education, my first priority has always been the
teachers. Not at the exclusion of the students. But I always believed if I looked after
the teachers really well, they would take care of the students.

IN: Students. Yes.

BIDDY: But I was lucky at CAE because it was a big department. I was the *co-ordinator* but I
also had two part-time workers adding up to a full-time position. One of whom was
completely dedicated to student welfare. So we were able, in a big program, to specialize
our roles to a certain extent.
My great love has always been curriculum development and professional development.
Which I see as two faces of the same thing. Because I really, really believed so strongly
I think that happens so much through the vision and creativity and values of the teachers. So I spent at CAE a lot of time working with the teachers. There was a fortnightly newsletter to the teachers, where I’d be throwing in articles I’d read or ideas I’d heard. There was a monthly teachers’ meeting. And there was - I used to hang around a lot, you know, I’d say a sort of meeting at the well. I visited every class.

IN: To be available for them.

Biddy: Each of the sixty or seventy classes every week. Not at length. But I’d just make sure I was there so they could find me. And that for me was my primary role, concentrating on that curriculum, professional development. As I say, because I believed in the power of education. I think what happens in the classroom is still one of the most magical things I can think about. And despite everything else still works wonders. So I used to think we’ve got to keep strengthening and reaffirming and stretching ourselves as teachers in order to do that job better and better and better.

IN: Do you think that was perhaps being big, the CAE - Do you think that was the same as what was happening in ACE? Or you know, in the community specifically. I mean the CAE from the ACE perspective is always like what we’d like to be.

Biddy: Exactly.

IN: But we haven’t got the resources at ACE, so there’s this divide. Not in aims, or goals, or values, but in the resources etc. So -

Biddy: And through the CAE, even before there were regions, we used to get out in the sort of, what then became the Central Region. But in that inner city area, we had a very strong network of ALBE workers. So we could meet, I have a feeling it was about once a month. So we had a lot to do with Carringbush, a lot to do with South Melbourne Adult Literacy program. I had a lot to do with all the small community organizations in the inner city. And we used to visit each other so that we had a first hand contact. So I did get to know quite a bit about the smaller adult community education organizations. As you know the CAE, I think, has always had an identity crisis. It didn’t know if it’s a big Neighbourhood House or whether it’s a small TAFE. And I don’t think that’s ever been resolved.

So in our network we had people from the smaller community organizations and also from TAFE. So we had some people from RMIT, and some people from Footscray. And so we did keep in touch with each other. We did a lot of co-ordinated activity in terms of referrals, in terms of sharing professional development. If anyone was running professional development, it was open to everybody else. And in terms of curriculum development we often did projects together.

So as much as possible, we tried to share the wealth that we had. But there’s no doubt that we knew, for example, that we could have three or four staged adult literacy programs and staged ESL programs. Whereas at Carringbush, or somewhere like that, within the one class there’d be all the adult literacy students, all the ESL students. And we knew it was far more demanding than what we were able to do.

So we were always in awe of the teachers in the smaller community places, because they had to do the whole spectrum in the one class. And so we always felt their tutors had to be super duper, duper. You know, to be able to do that. And - and with far less resources in every sense, not only in ….. And in our program we could offer in the Adult Literacy program: Psychology, Australian History, Australian Studies, Human Studies, Peace Studies. You know, and we knew the other programs couldn’t do that. So we did feel quite well endowed, but we also had a strong sense of responsibility to share that as much as possible without taking a domineering role. A tricky thing, you know, to actually work with other people when there’s quite a strong resources difference like that.
IN: Yes. We used to come in there for union things I remember, when I first started. And we saw the CAE, from my perspective, more like a parent in a way, you know. So there was that 'Oh they’re lucky, but they’re the same as us but they’re, you know, like a …

BIDDY: The size meant that we could do projects, we could take on projects.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: We could get statewide money projects to do this because we had both the size there, you know, the sort of the critical mass, as you might say. But we also were involved in a lot of networks. I know most of the projects I did from there, I already knew people all round the State because of the CAE. And in the past, before I was with CAE officially had a role, a lead agency role. It wasn’t officially so when I was still there but there’d been a tradition -

IN: Yes.

IN: And in a way they were similar, but the resources and the venues are the big difference. And you think that there’s a huge difference between the ACE you saw when you started, I mean, you can say CAE or whatever. And the way now.

BIDDY: But since then I’ve worked in a lot of different ACE.

IN: You’ve got the whole range. Yes.

BIDDY: Well, what I do see is people having to make really difficult decisions, people who are working in ACE organizations. Particularly if I think of somebody like you in the role that you’re in as the co-ordinator or manager. Having to make really difficult decisions about the direction the ACE organization is going to go in. Because I see a lot more - a much greater range of choices and pressures. And people can’t do all things.

IN: And you think we’re trying to?

BIDDY: Yes. ………….and trying. Well I see them saying ‘Well so maybe we can’t. So maybe we do what we’re good at or what we think this community most needs’. And I see those as very painful choices. Some I suppose, the ends of the spectrum I’m talking about, are equivalent courses that are employment focused. It’s relatively, motivated relatively advantaged students. That’s one end of the spectrum.

IN: Community

BIDDY: The other end of the spectrum is people who - programs and students with - know they want to do something, they’re not quite sure what they want to do, but they want to take a step from where they are somewhere, somehow, doing something. But it is nowhere near as explicit or as clear a pathway as somebody who comes in and says ‘I want to do …
these VCE subjects’, or ‘I want to do Certificate II in something’ or “I want to get into that TAFE course and how do I do it’. That’s one end it seems to me. The other is the people who feel ‘I just want to do something, you know, I want to learn something, I want to be part of something, but I don’t know where to start’. You couldn’t put them in, you know, say, ‘well this is obviously the pathway. You need this here’.

I see people struggling along that whole spectra about where to put energy. Especially as funding tends to favour one end of the spectrum, more and more it seems than the other. But people still want to be true to that tradition of access and community development, is how I would see it. You know, like we belong in this community and we want to contribute to the development of this community. At the expense of ticking off on a sheet, how many have got into TAFE or university courses, you know.

So I do see the opposite big change. And I do see people making, organizations making decisions about that. And the positive side is the emergence of some really strong organizations, ACE organizations, as a result of some hard thinking and some hard choices. But they’ve each got their own distinct identity. So if you think of places like Moreland Adult Ed, PRACE, Olympic, Glenroy, you know, these are organizations where there’s, as I said, an identity crisis or a bit of a split personality for the organization. And then you’ve got some other regions who said ‘Let’s look at our history, let’s look at our conditions, let’s look at where we are now, let’s look at the possibilities for the future. How would we identify ourselves’. In other words, what’s going to be at the core of our identity and what are the programs and other aspects of our organization that are going to embody and express that.

So I do see people just can’t float along that. They really have to be quite decisive about the - who they are and what they want to stand for and do, as a result of that. And I do see some people really bruised in this whole process. Like, people who they don’t want to do the AQTF, but that means then, you know, they can’t do the alternative programs. Which then means they feel they’re staying true to something really, really vital to them. But are they being seen then as somehow second class in some way?

So the - I do see that sort of, that’s a big change to me. That sense of the consequences of the choices you make branding you in some way.

And I do see - though there’s one organization that I’d rather not name, but it’s not in Northern Region. But when people started doing Workplace Training, for example, they said it’s really split this organization in two. What we do is, the days we do our Workplace Training, you know, we put on our suits, we go out and use one set of language and then we come back and do our community education. And we wear different clothes and we talk in a different way.

Now I think they see that as being virtuous. I see that as being quite - could be an identity crisis or a bit of a split personality for the organization. And there’s an implicit proclamation that one’s superior to the other, you know. So I mean … be a difficult choice organizations have to make with …

The spectrum has broadened well beyond anything it has before. Which has brought in chances for people to make all sorts of combinations and permutations from all those choices. Some have relished that, others haven’t. You know, people like Alphalink have made wonderful new combinations. Others have really, I think, struggled with that and feel like they’re drowning. So -

IN: You’ve summed that up really well. Yeah. I think even people who seem to be coping sometimes have a sense of the drowning. You know, because there are just too many things to cope with. Without the resources.

BIDDY: And I think absolutely, Meg, in order that - it’s demanded so much of the leadership position. Like, you know, I was at the CAE, I could focus on curriculum development and professional development. One of the reasons I left them was that was starting to change. And I think now particularly the people in the leadership position such as yourself, and as the people on your committee have identified, have to be so good at so many different things. And far more than any one person can possibly do.

IN: Yes. Yes.

MJC
So the dilemma then is, do I do a whole lot of things half well or, you know, or do I do a whole lot of things as well as I can. I'm only one person with only a certain amount of time and energy. Or do I focus on the things I do well and believe in and realize the consequences on the others. Or do I try and bring in some way, through the committee or through creating positions or through restructuring the whole organization, a different way of redistributing that. But they're all good hard decisions. And there's not a lot of, it seems to me, emphasis given to that thinking time. Which is the basis of everything. Like if we don't have time to reflect on these big, hard decisions and make these decisions on the run. We live with the consequences of half thought out decisions. 

IN: ………………. always making those decisions. Yeah.

BIDDY: And I see things like the clusters I think, have enabled some opportunity for people to pause for a while, to think about what's going on, identify priorities, to consider and plan around together. It seems to me to be a good move.

IN: And they got rid of it this year.

BIDDY: I know. I know. It seemed like -

IN: It was a good idea at the time.

BIDDY: Yes. And I've had a bit to do with clusters in different regions, not just in the Northern Region. And I saw them as such a positive move for people, again like you, who have so much in common but don't really often have a chance to meet.

IN: That networking aspect. Yes.

BIDDY: Yes. But also a bit of money behind that to, you know, make the decisions about priorities. And to do something, you know, whatever it was. So there's hundreds, there's dozens of examples of what people ……… important area ………. You can't sort of ………. the person in the leadership position. Take cognizance of everything that was going on, make policies coming in that come through the Internet or through the post, through to the day to day needs.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: Yes. Like, you could spend your whole time just keeping up with what's going on. Much less evaluating it all. And then much less for what do we do here - than we have now in this place. So that's a huge change. The range.

IN: It's sorting the amount of material and trying to go somewhere with it.

BIDDY: Exactly.

IN: It was much less complex in the past. And much less complex and much smaller spectrum of activities and issues.

BIDDY: Well for me each of the words is important, Adult - Community - Education. I suppose too, I mean, as we were saying before, any term includes something and excludes other things. Because I'd love the word Further Education in there too. So let's just not stay on that for the moment.

I love it because it's adults. I love it that you're working with people who've had enough life experience to be able to start reflecting on it and making some key decisions about their own lives. And that we look after adults at all life stages, from all backgrounds, and all with the life experience to contribute to whatever is happening. So there's this sense of working with people at critical moments in their adult life.
The **Community** aspects, I think, are community development is a really important part of community education. Though I do see it as a group, a collective effort. To engage with the local community in a whole range of ways. And to join in the **fellowship** or **solidarity** with other community organizations in that neighbourhood or beyond. Who further some vision of a more humane, or just a more healthy community. And the Education - and the Education for me is about people having the chance to think about the big ideas, the capacities we need to realize the **visions** we have for ourselves and our society. And to join that, to turn that thinking into some sort of **personal** and collective action. So the education for me is that chance to just step back a little bit and to look at where we are. Look at the world we’re living in and saying ‘Is this who we want to be, is this how we wanted it to be’? If not, ‘What changes, what differences do we want to make and how do we do that. What sort of capacities do I need, what sort of - what do I need to learn, to do, to be, to think, to get there? To make that happen’. **IN**: Yeah. That’s great.

**BIDDY**: Each of those words is really important to me. And the three all come together in different ways, in different places, at different times, for different reasons.

**IN**: A shift in the emphasis. Yeah. And what don’t you like? Just - go on - tell me what you don’t like.

**BIDDY**: What don’t I like. Well, sometimes I suspect it can be - in some places it can be a bit of a move towards **parochialism**. You know what I mean. Like definitely cut off and thinking -

**IN**: Glorying in it.

**BIDDY**: Glorifying in it. Yes. And saying ‘We don’t need anyone else to our ………’. The outside world is a big, bad world. There can be a tendency towards that, more in the country than in the city though, I think. And there can be a bit of **anti-intellectualism**. It can be a bit of a sense of ‘We don’t want to be doing all this talking’. You know. And thinking ‘We just want to do it, we just want to do it’.

**IN**: That’s right. Action. Yeah.

**BIDDY**: So there’s a bit of a, you know, I think, I mean That’s in a lot of places. But if organizations get too small, or too cut off, or too embittered. They’re, I suppose, the things that are dangers.

**IN**: Yes. And you see that. But sometimes it’s a cycle, I think.

**BIDDY**: I don’t think in the metropolitan areas very much to be honest. It’s more I see in the country. And less and less of that too I think. Because people who think like that tend to leave. And then other people tend to get appointed.

**IN**: Yes.

**BIDDY**: Sorry ………

**IN**: No. Just checking I’ve got enough tape left. I’ve got another one there, I’ll try that.

Right you’ve sort of answered that one. So I was interested to hear - one of the things I’ve discovered, which wasn’t something I’d expected to discover, that makes it fascinating, is the multiple roles of people in ACE.

You know, when I started this I thought now I’ll interview some students, some teachers and some committee, volunteers. But suddenly I’m finding that people have done all four. An amazing percentage of people. And that’s asking staff, asking volunteers. So I asked staff members the other day, thinking they’d only ever been a staff member. And they said ‘Oh yes. But I’m a volunteer on the committee over in this other suburb’. And
'Oh no. I started out as -' and 'Oh no. You didn’t always but there’s a place down the road. I’ve done multimedia up there’. So -

BIDDY: Many, many roles.

IN: And the best part is what you’ve just said just backs that up. Because I had this perception of being ……… of becoming a ………., worked at the CAE maybe and done the ACE thing and that’s strictly as a staff member. I know you’ve done a bit as a volunteer. But you’ve actually even said you were a student.

BIDDY: Yes. Yes.

IN: So - do you find that interesting?

BIDDY: It is interesting.

IN: That people are engaged ………. And not only in one organization. But maybe Diamond Valley because it’s a little bit more geographically isolated, not in rural terms. But if you lived around here say, in Coburg. You might nip down to Brunswick or up to Fawkner or, you know what I mean? Just on the tram. I’m finding that fascinating.

BIDDY: And I think both simultaneously and over times. People might be doing it at the time and they’ve done it over time. And I think all of those. I’m a great believer that our selves are made up of multiple identities at any one time. And that whatever - you know, if we’re a mother, if we’re a friend or a neighbour, if we’re an ACE committee member or whatever. All of those roles goes into every other role.

IN: That’s right. Yes.

BIDDY: And even though we might be focusing on a particular aspect of our life. It’s not like we say ‘Let’s focus in on the mother bit. Oh well, these other bits have to go to sleep now’. They all come in. And so if we have been a committee member and a student and a staff member. All of them comes in whichever aspect it is coming to the fore at that particular time. And I think like - if you think of it all like knitting together like this. You’ve got this very strong fabric.

IN: That’s right. Yes.

BIDDY: Exactly. Exactly.

IN: I’ve talked to a couple of people mainly at RMIT and a couple at NMIT. And although I haven’t done anything further on it or collated it up. I haven’t seen this phenomena. They’ve said ‘Oh we’ve done PD’, when I’ve said ‘Are you enrolled in anything?’, that’s what they’ve seen themselves as a staff member who has done PD. So they may have enrolled in a course at their own institute or another one but for professional development and not engaging as in say an ACE course.

BIDDY: I think a lot of the people who work in ACE, of course, are working part-time or in casual positions. So their lives generally are a lot more fluid. Somebody who’s working in a TAFE college quite often is working full-time.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: So there’s little - a lot more of their time is focused in one place.

IN: One place. Yes.

BIDDY: It would be interesting how many of the people in TAFE colleges, because a lot have, have worked in the ACE sector before being in the TAFE college, of after. So I think
IN: Yes. Yes.

BIDDY: You just can’t - Very few people can work full-time in the ACE sector. So a lot of people very reluctantly leave the ACE sector and go to the TAFE sector, for better working conditions. And then of course, I think well, they haven’t got the same - very different life stage thing, to be able to take on a number of roles.

IN: Yes. As a volunteer or whatever. Exactly. That’s right.

BIDDY: I should say just - I mean it’s not connected with that, but I was originally a secondary school teacher. You’re right I was a secondary - And I did teach for about seven years in secondary schools. So that is my background. As an English teacher.

IN: Yes. And was that in the State school system?

BIDDY: Yes. In the tech. school system. One year at Korumburra High School but then the rest at tech. schools.

IN: Oh, that’s interesting. Some of the questions - you’ve already answered, OK, those sections. So I’m not going …… as a student. You’ve sort of taken these roles on and - The question I had here about people who’ve gone to TAFE or university, as well as ACE. You know, how would you have - Just quickly sum up the difference between maybe TAFE, university and ACE. Or do you think there are so many exceptions it’s not worth defining them.

BIDDY: Well of course, all of these have changed so much over time. I mean, when I went to university - I mean university is a particular thing now. It’s brief has broadened so much as have TAFE colleges and ACE. Or do you think there are so many exceptions it’s not worth defining them.

BIDDY: Well of course, all of these have changed so much over time. I mean, when I went to university - I mean university is a particular thing now. It’s brief has broadened so much as have TAFE colleges and ACE. But -

IN: So that’s a commonality then isn’t it? They’ve all broadened their brief.

BIDDY: Absolutely. And I see TAFE and ACE having a very - it’s a bit like Judaism and Christianity. I mean, they do have quite a lot of common ground. Because that FE in TAFE has a strong tradition very similar to the Adult Community Education tradition and ethos. And I know people all round the State in the FE departments, whether they’re Adult Literacy or Liberal Arts or VCE or whatever, they are very committed to those ideals that we were talking about before. But of course they are in a much - they’re in a minority in their TAFE organization. And that does make a difference. I mean, I do think there are groups within those TAFE organizations that are as committed and conscientious and compassionate and capable as anything I see in ACE. But they’re in that bigger vocational training environment. And so that’s a big influence on them.

Similar, you know, in contrast ACE it’s smallness is both a virtue and a limitation. You know, quite often it’s easy to get cut off from some of the other things that are happening in the bigger education.

Universities I see as quite different on the whole. Because they have quite, they don’t have quite the - I mean, even though they’re introducing RPL and credit a lot more now. They tend to have much more set, precise pathways in and out of them. That is changing, I think it will change more and more. But there’s much more fuzzy edges around ACE and TAFE, you know, in terms of coming in and going out. And who’s there and why they’re there.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: I think the fact that TAFE college are also TAFE institutes became quite separate from each other too, has been a big influence. Because it used to be it’d see itself much more
like a TAFE culture. Now I think each of the organizations have become huge businesses. And that has shaped the environment within each of those organizations and they have much less sense of a common mission now, I think.

I think the pressure on ACE organizations to be small businesses is a very mixed blessing too. Because if you bring in a corporate template to something that is not measured through the eyes of economic rationalism, it creates a huge sense of confusion and trying to bring together - trying to have two things that are actually quite contradictory co-exist. So it’s trying to do something impossible.

IN: Yes. Yes.

BIDDY: So I see the same economic rationalist forces bearing down on all the three organizations. I think they’ve all got that in common. Having to deal with that, those three sectors. But they’ve dealt with it in different ways. I think the ACE sector of all has tried hardest to keep - the, I suppose you might call community development project, for want of a better word, to the fore. At great cost to itself and its workers I have to add.

IN: That’s right. Because there’s no money for a pay rise for the teachers in ACE.

BIDDY: No. No. No.

IN: They’re doing exactly, well nearly, the same job.

BIDDY: They seem to be doing more and more.

IN: ?????????????? basically the same job as a TAFE teacher. ??????????????or somebody. ‘They don’t deserve the same pay. Because they’re not doing the same as a TAFE teacher’. And in a way that’s true, classes are smaller, aren’t they? But often the clients are more diverse and more needy.

BIDDY: I’d have to see what that person meant. Because I …….

IN: Oh, I’ll have to ask Jude about it. Because I know she said it at a meeting.

BIDDY: I’m sure that the TAFE union has, you know, argued that ‘This is what teachers do and this is why they deserve this money’. It would be interesting to see what the - how the description compares with what is put through for ACE teachers. Because I would argue, if it’s on educational grounds, both are doing equally. …??????????????? The people work in and out and so many people work in both.

IN: I think they were meaning the size of classes. And that’s certainly valid. But - Yeah. I’m not sure if it holds true for everywhere. A very high percentage of concessions, maybe in TAFE they do it, well with waived fees for multiple disadvantages.

BIDDY: Yes. Well, some of the TAFE classes I’ve taken have been big. And I couldn’t have distinguished them from ACE classes. In the sense that we had a huge range ………

IN: In what you’ve got to deliver.

BIDDY: Yes. So - But then there are more resources there. You’ve got a big library and you’ve got, you know, a canteen and you’ve got a whole lot of other things, you know, that you don’t have.

IN: We’ve got a couple of rooms in the back of the library.

BIDDY: Plus councillors, you know. Exactly.

IN: I was just going to ask you if you knew about the Diploma of Further Ed?
IN: I really wanted to ask you a couple of questions about your own Framework.

IN: Because they are distinct from anybody else’s questions that I’m going to ask.

BIDDY: OK.

IN: A couple of the teachers I’ve made a reference to the question ‘Do you feel people tend to forget …’s Framework. And some people were very, as you know very excited about it when it came out. And we all felt it legitimised what we did and we all got very tearful about that at the time, you know. And looking at Padma’s photos we were going ‘Ooh’, you know.

And there were still some people who were there, mainly I think oldies, you know, all that stuff with IT for older non-English speakers, you know. All the things that had not been given any credit before And but now I’m finding when I went to a meeting the other day that people are saying ‘You’ve got to find some way to legitimise the Further Education we do’. That was actually said at a Northern Met meeting and I thought - I expected a couple of people to immediately jump up and said ‘Well why don’t you just justify it in terms of Delia’s Framework’. So do you think people are forgetting and we need to remind them that there’s ………

BIDDY: You mean the Framework not the Diploma of Further Ed?

IN: No I was going to talk about that. But I decided your Framework was more important.

BIDDY: OK. It’s hard to judge. It’s very hard to judge.

IN: I’d hate to think. Because the impact it had when it came out …… that as people have moved in and out of the sector. Do you get a sense of that?

BIDDY: I don’t think there’s been a sort of consistent momentum from the Centre or from the Regions, to support it as a statement about Adult Community Education. I don’t think.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: I think individuals carry it in their minds and in their hearts and in their work. But I don’t think there has been an official, you know, sustained momentum. And I don’t know if that’s a resistance to it or whether it’s ignorance, you know, not knowing about it. Or having other priorities. You know, like if you’re going to be concentrating on non-educational issues. What I would see as non-education issues. Maybe something like this just doesn’t come to mind, you know, at an official level. I’m now talking at an official level. If you’re concentrating on setting up partnerships or if you’re concentrating on getting the AQTF in place. Do you know what I mean?

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: Like if you’re concentrating on those sorts of things and not on what’s actually happening in the learning -

IN: Classroom environment. Yes.

BIDDY: You’re probably not thinking about, you know, what’s a good way of actually keeping that to the fore. So I get the sense - I mean it’s only very vague - that officially it hasn’t been sustained. I think that it’s sustained very erratically probably in the places depending on who knows it and what they know about it.

So I know it’s used a lot, for example, in all the tertiary courses that people do. At Monash, at V.U., at Melbourne Uni. You know, people who are doing any sort of adult
education qualifications. I know it’s used a lot because there isn’t anything similar to it.
But I don’t think - I think it is incidentally used a lot. But I don’t think it’s officially supported.

IN: One year, in our ACE funding, we were told to justify what we were running.

BIDDY: That’s what I mean.

IN: According to it and plotted against it. And the next year it wasn’t mentioned, and hasn’t been mentioned since. So I was quite saddened about that. And I think that a lot of people were excited by it and still, as you said, hold that sort of like in your heart, you know, the first time that we were legitimate is how we saw it.

BIDDY: And also an alternative to CBT. See I mean, it quite consciously was conceived as a project, as a chance for Adult Community Further Education. But Further Education in particular.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: To stand its ground. To say this is the ground we stand on. It’s different from vocational training. We don’t want to squeeze ourselves into - we can’t squeeze ourselves into the competency based training. We need a different language, we need a different discourse, we need a different ethos, we need a different framework for doing that.

So it was quite consciously, at an official level, conceived for that reason. And as far as I know there’s still not an alternative to CBT for people working in adult education. So it may need refreshment.

IN: That’s what I was just going to suggest. Now we could ……. on that. And we could get you -

BIDDY: I mean even the documents themselves might need some refreshing, you know.

IN: Oh all right. We need to do a project for ACFE.

BIDDY: Because it’s five years. Maybe longer. It seems amazing to me.

IN: Yes. But I think there’s such a shrinking population that, you know, the old timers have - all sort of have held onto it. And you know, we can still do that little chart, you know, with that multiplicity, you know, stuff. Because I’m not teaching it so I must admit I couldn’t sit down and do it like the first couple of years. But - Yeah. I think, you know, it needs that reminder and how easy it is to apply it to what you’re doing. Not - ‘Oh my God. Here’s another system we’ve got to learn’.

BIDDY: You know, like 101 criteria and elements.

IN: Yes. That’s right. …….. in pages of the AQTF to get ‘Now come on where’s the documentation’. It’s not that. You can produce it sort of in a more of a table.


IN: But you can just plot it so easily by just making notes in a table.

BIDDY: What I think is it’s great strength, actually is the curriculum design model. Which is we’ve had learning outcomes for a while. We’ve talked a bit about recognition outcomes. But it’s stretched that beyond certificates, you know. It can be your learning journal. Or it can be an IT folio that you make, etc., etc.

The pathways outcomes - it’s more than going to a job or another course. It’s, you know, ‘Do you know that you can go into RMIT and have a coffee, on your own’. And underneath all that is what are the education practices that are going to make that
possible. See there’s the training packages forbade any talk about how you’re
going to do it, you know.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: So I think that model, and I noticed now that’s coming back and back, and back.

IN: They’re discussing it. Yes.

BIDDY: CBT is going to - it’s going away. It’s dying a natural death. Nobody will ever say it
was a terrible mistake, but it will just die away. Because it’s not doing what it was meant
to do.

So I think that curriculum development and it’s also very simple. People who’ve never
done any teaching and people who’ve done lots and lots of teaching, all respond to that
and find that really helpful. So that they can go back and forth and saying ‘Oh well, if
I really value this sort of outcome for somebody. What does that mean I do in the
classroom?’

IN: And how do I legitimise it to other people?

BIDDY: Exactly.

IN: We always knew we could say ‘Look, we saw this woman, she came in -. And they’d
go warm and fuzzy, warm and fuzzy. And you’d know it wasn’t warm and fuzzy.

Because her life had changed.

BIDDY: So it’s saying each of these should be up there with the learning outcomes, you know.

IN: And it’s not taking away from the educational outcomes either. …… It’s broadening
it.

BIDDY: Exactly. Yes. That I think - I think that’s actually had it’s influence in all sorts of ways
may never, ever be traced. I actually see that more and more. So getting some of those
terms around, and especially the definitions of some of those terms. You know,
stretching them a bit beyond the more like articulated - I always think of those trucks,
you know, they’re all firmly attached to each other. There’s not much room to move.

IN: Yes. Yes. And yet there is movement there. And it fits in well with the CGEA.

Whether you want accreditation besides or not. You can slot it all in. Like the Diploma
of Further Ed., which of course we run. It fitted in with everything, you know, the
lifelong learning, that stuff, the law stuff. And, you know, all of that sort of came
together in all of those things packaged. Do you feel that?

BIDDY: Yes. Very much so. Yes.

IN: The aims are all -

BIDDY: It was I mean, I see it mainly as like a credo or a declaration of beliefs. A vision of what
we think our work is. I mean, it would be interesting to go back and have a look at
it. As I say, maybe it needs -some sort of a -

IN: But I don’t think it needs changing, in terms of what we’re doing. But maybe just
bringing back to the fore with a bit of publicity or something--

END OF TAPE—DECIDED NOT TO REPEAT LAST FEW WORDS AND RECORD THANKS

IN: Thank you for that. I’ll type this up and send a copy to you.
IN: Interview with Biddy, the 22nd of December

………you know you don’t have to answer any questions. You can stop at any time or turn the tape off.

BIDDY: Are we OK now? Good. Great. We might have a flute and a tam and a few other -

IN: A bit of noise, yes. I’m recording but I’ll take some notes anyway. It’s OK with me.

Can you tell me a little bit about yourself if you want to? You can always not answer, you know that. Maybe where you were born or about your family. If that’s OK?

BIDDY: OK. I was born in Gippsland, but left there when I was just over one. So I never think of myself as coming from the country, as my family moved then to Cheltenham, a suburb in Melbourne. And I spent most of my childhood and adolescence there.

Going to the local Catholic primary school for the first six or seven years. And then to Kilbreda College for my secondary schooling. So that’s probably the most significant influences in my life.

That my father was a post master. So I never lived in a normal house or a normal community. I lived in this rather strange post office world. And very much a Catholic world at that time, but with a very - Just recently, this year, I was asked to speak at the Centenary of my school, under the topic of ‘Kilbreda Girls Grow Up’. And it gave me an opportunity to think what I learnt in my secondary school days, at that school.

And I was really surprised to see how many of the values that I now hold, go back to those days.

IN: Is that a - that’s a private school or a church run Catholic school? And all girls, was it?

BIDDY: All girls. Yes. And that was significant. Yes. And all women staff. So it was a completely female community. Completely.

IN: That’s interesting. A lot of people have talked about things like that as a defining influence on their life.

BIDDY: One of the four things I identified when I gave the talk was that implicit feminism that I learnt and saw all around me in my schooling. The other was multiculturalism. The other was social justice. And the other was a love of language and symbols and rituals.

IN: And that’s influenced you ever since, obviously.

BIDDY: I see those as being born in those days and growing stronger through my life. And it being a recurrent theme right through my life, if I look back now. It was not until I was asked to do this that I really identified the origins of some of these really important values. So -

IN: Would you have called it a privileged school or -?

BIDDY: No. It wasn’t a privileged school. The Brigidine nuns who run it, were very committed to social justice. In terms of - like it wasn’t the fees. Well, my family, probably because the family wasn’t well off, so the fees weren’t easily met. But I happened to win scholarships, so it wasn’t an issue for me. But if there were girls who couldn’t afford the fees, the nuns just looked the other way, you know. So nobody was ever turned away.

IN: Yes. Yes. Oh, that’s interesting, isn’t it?

BIDDY: We certainly had to - it was privileged in the sense of, we had to have a uniform, you know. And there were fees at a time when there were no fees in government schools.

But it was a matter covering the costs. It wasn’t a money making activity at all.

But it wasn’t privileged in other ways in that, for example, there was no office stream, there was no commercial stream, there was no domestic stream.

MJC
IN: That’s unusual, isn’t it?
BIDDY: It was a very *academically* focused school. Which suited me very well. But didn’t necessarily suit everybody.
So I suppose it was *privileged* in one way. In it was assumed that we were all interested in ideas, and wanted to talk about ideas. And that was *encouraged*.
On the other hand, I think it overlooked and it probably was quite blind to those who weren’t interested in those things. It’s something I’ve often thought since, I’d like to do a bit of research myself, how it was for the girls who didn’t find that attractive. Like my sister left after two years, for example, and went off and did an apprenticeship in hairdressing. And was much happier at *Malvern* Girls School.

IN: Yes. It’s funny how that happens in the family with siblings, isn’t it? Is she your only sister? Just the two girls.
BIDDY: Yes. *One* sister and three brothers.

IN: Oh, three brothers. I have no brothers, we’re from an all girl family. So it’s interesting that it changes the dynamics, doesn’t it? Having brothers? So they tell me.
BIDDY: Well, I think being the - I was the fourth child but the first *girl*. And I was absolutely *adored*.

IN: Yes.
BIDDY: And only again, in later life, I realized that I was so welcomed when I came into this world. No matter what I said or did, it was going to be fantastic. I think it was harder for my sister, being just close behind.

IN: Yes.
BIDDY: Yes. And I was named after my father’s mother. Who was an Irish woman. So not only was I the first girl, but I was the reincarnation of his *dead* mother I some ways. So I think that all gave me a *great* sense of being welcome and valued and probably did my self-esteem quite a lot of good.

IN: Brothers are often …………, often very welcoming. Because people have said that in the past.
BIDDY: Yes. Yes.

IN: You know, that boys are not seen as nurturing. But I’ve found often they’re more nurturing or just as nurturing. Aren’t they?
BIDDY: Well, I believe my third brother ran around Trafalgar, where I was born, saying ‘I’ve got a baby sister. I’ve got a baby sister’.

IN: Oh, isn’t that lovely. A good bonus.
BIDDY: So I think that is a factor. I don’t think that ………… But also my *mother* I think was a significant influence, again on later reflection. She left school in Grade 8. Which was normal at that time. And got her Merit, was very proud of that.

IN: Yes. That’s right.
BIDDY: But when my *partner*, Bill, was doing his masters some years later, he interviewed her in terms of people who’d left school and what they’d thought about that since. And she had always had a *craving* to go on to further study. Which she never ever did. And I think some of that was fed into me.
IN: Yes. And nowadays she probably would have.

BIDDY: She would have. And I’ll tell you what she did do, and I’ve written about this so I won’t go into a lot of detail here. She did the Dale Carnegie course in the 50’s. And I think it was her version of mature age women going back to study. Because it was quite a serious course, where she went every week. They had to do speeches, they had to do group activity. She was the only woman in fifty men. You know, I mean a gutsy thing to do.

IN: Oh, very. Yes.

BIDDY: And I think that that was her struggling to actually do something where she could be stretched intellectually, would be successful intellectually. And where she would get some sort of public recognition.

IN: Because you know if you’ve got a good brain. Though in those days, maybe you didn’t get to use it.

BIDDY: Yes. So I think that was probably another influence somewhere, you know. That it’s really important to get a good education. Even though it was, I mean, it was never an issue for me. I loved school, I loved learning, I loved reading and I loved writing. So it was never an issue that I had to be kept at school. But it was never an issue either that there was anything to question about that. Although my father did say after Year 11, after Leaving, he did say ‘The bank’s a really good job. Well, you know, I don’t see why you wouldn’t go into the bank’.

IN: It was. In those days.

BIDDY: Yes. So I think that was probably another influence somewhere, you know. That it’s really important to get a good education. Even though it was, I mean, it was never an issue for me. I loved school, I loved learning, I loved reading and I loved writing. So it was never an issue that I had to be kept at school. But it was never an issue either that there was anything to question about that. Although my father did say after Year 11, after Leaving, he did say ‘The bank’s a really good job. Well, you know, I don’t see why you wouldn’t go into the bank’.

IN: Yes. It’s a very formative thing if you think about it, using all that sort of thing. Isn’t it?

BIDDY: Yes. Yes.

IN: And they’re the things that, you know, I was going to ask you about. What you feel formed you. But that’s covered that. So -

BIDDY: I think what formed me was, I think, a strong sense, a strong sense social justice, tradition within the Catholic community that I knew. It’s not necessarily present in all Catholic communities.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: I think the Irish heritage, I won’t go on about that. But I used to love being - I never did meet my Irish grandmother, but I always had lots of imaginary conversations with her. I think, the world of literature. I was a great reader as a young one. And since my family life was quite difficult in some ways, my parents were both very unhappy. And so the world of ideas and books was a great other worlds that were open to me. And I think formed a basis of realizing the power and beauty of that inner world. And what - and the power of ideas and reflection and contemplation that came from that very early time. I think, perhaps being, yes, the first daughter was also an important influence too.

IN: A lot of people have commented on, you know, their sibling place or, you know, the number of siblings.
BIDDY: I think it’s very important. Yes. Very important issue.

IN: And the only children have all commented on that, you know, in a not a negative necessarily. But the lack. Yeah. They’ve felt diminished now as adults by not having any, which is interesting.

BIDDY: Yes. Yes.

IN: OK. You were very positive about your early schooling.

BIDDY: I loved school.

IN: Loved it. Yes. That’s great.

Well, can I ask you where and how you found out about ACE? Adult Community Education.

BIDDY: OK.

IN: I know you’ve got a history of some teaching positions. Haven’t you?

BIDDY: My first experience was as a student.

IN: Oh, right.

BIDDY: I was living in Hurstbridge which is on the northern fringes of Melbourne. In a mud brick house. With a little baby.

IN: Oh, right.

BIDDY: And I had been teaching at the local secondary school and resigned when I became a mother. And a newsletter arrived in our letterbox one day from the Diamond Valley Learning Centre. And it said, you know, ‘Are you looking for something or interested in doing something a bit different’. I’ve also written about this at another time. And I knew I didn’t want to do VCE. And I didn’t want to do art/craft courses because there were too many half finished art/craft projects around the house. But there was one called ‘Women in Australian History and Literature’. Which was co-ordinated by two women I’m still friendly with, Robyn Hartley and Diane Parsons. And it became - we met for the next three years. It became a collective group, they initiated it and then we all - it was a study group, I suppose.

IN: Yes. Yes.

BIDDY: So that was my first experience with adult education in the Diamond Valley Learning Centre. In the mid 70’s, that would have been. And from there I then - well, I had then an experience there as a student, and as a co-learner. And then we moved to Bentleigh and I remember thinking ‘Oh that women’s group I was part of in Greensborough would be fantastic if there were something like that in Bentleigh’. And there was nothing like that. But there was a community development organization called Scope there. And I thought it would be great through them, to set up a women’s, an adult education woman’s group. Commensurate with it.

BIDDY: So I initiated a group there modeled much the same on the Diamond Valley lines. And then - look, over a number of years, I was an adult education tutor. I was a committed member of Scope. I was a home tutor scheme tutor. I did voluntary work at the local women’s refuge, which also had an education process. I did a lot of committee work, voluntary work. I worked with the Learning Exchange newspaper at one stage, you know, writing up things. So a very wide variety of skills and roles, diverse roles.

IN: And that’s interesting because I pictured you coming in as a teacher. Moving straight into ACE as an ACE teacher. From maybe a secondary background. So I obviously

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haven’t read your biography or anything. You’ll have to point to me, point me in the
direction.

BIDDY: So I’ve had, probably for six or seven years, experience in a whole range of roles, in a
whole range of organizations.

IN: Yes. Yes.

BIDDY: My adult literacy tutor experience, which was again as a voluntary tutor, was at
Holmesglen TAFE. But then about early 80’s was appointed co-ordinator of a project
called ‘Recreation Opportunities for Migrant Women’. I preferred to call Learning
Opportunities. You known, formal and non-formal learning opportunities for
immigrant women. I was involved with that project for three or four years. So that was
really my first paid position. Working quite explicitly and directly on creating and
supporting and networking with all sorts of organizations committed to learning
opportunities for immigrant women. And the learning was to do with English, it was to
do with child care, it was to do with health, it was to do with working in a bureaucracy,
get to know your child’s school, A whole range. There were - about 150 groups were
in that group - all with no specific groups. So the Vietnamese speaking, the Spanish
speaking and Turkish speaking etc.
And from there I went to - Oh, there’s a few other jobs, but the next probably
significant one was the Council of Adult Education.

IN: Yes

BIDDY: Where I was co-ordinator. Although, by that time, the title had been changed. And I
think ended up being manager of the Adult Basic Education department. Which
became the Return to Study Department. And at various times included ESL or not,
because restructure took place.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: So there my role was, I was able to bring together all my experiences to that point.
Working in the community, working as a tutor, working as a committee member,
working as a community development worker.
And in the meantime, actually I’d forgotten about that, I did my Grad. Dip. In
Community Education at Monash. And that was a two years course which was one day a
week. And everybody had to be employed in the community education sector. And we
worked out our two years study was very much based on the work we were doing. And
the work of all the others that were involved. So it was very much action research based.
And I was working on the migrant woman’s project when I did that.
So very much that experience drew me into very close encounters with issues to do with
multiculturalism, feminism, ethnicity, race, class. So you know, I brought all of those
different experiences when I came to CAE with responsibility for a whole program. As
you know the CAE program is a big program, there were about 800 students when I
arrived, and about fifty tutors.
And I must say, in Adult Community Education, my first priority has always been the
teachers. Not at the exclusion of the students. But I always believed if I looked after
the teachers really well, they would take care of the students.

IN: Students. Yes.

BIDDY: But I was lucky at CAE because it was a big department. I was the co-ordinator but I
also had two part-time workers adding up to a full-time position. One of whom was
completely dedicated to student welfare. So we were able, in a big program, to specialize
our roles to a certain extent.
My great love has always been curriculum development and professional development.
Which I see as two faces of the same thing. Because I really, really believed so strongly
And so we did, we kept in touch with each other. We did a lot of co-ordinated activity.

So we did feel quite well endowed, but we also had a strong sense of responsibility to share that as much as possible without taking a domineering role. A tricky thing, you know. We knew the other programs couldn’t do that.

Studies, Peace Studies. You know, and we knew the other programs couldn’t do that. So in our network we had people from the smaller community organizations and also smaller adult community education organizations.

BIDDY: And through the CAE, even before there were regions, we used to get out in the sort of, what then became the Central Region. Then it became the Central West Region. But in that inner city area, we had a very strong network of ALBE workers. So we could meet, I have a feeling it was about once a month. So we had a lot to do with running professional development, it was open to everybody else. And in terms of referrals, in terms of sharing professional development. If anyone was concentrating on that curriculum, professional development. As I say, because I believed in the power of education. I think what happens in the classroom is still one of the most magical things I can think about. And despite everything else still works wonders. So I used to think we’ve got to keep strengthening and reaffirming and stretching ourselves as teachers in order to do that job better and better and better.

IN: Do you think that was perhaps being big, the CAE - Do you think that was the same as what was happening in ACE? Or you know, in the community specifically. I mean the CAE from the ACE perspective is always like what we’d like to be.

BIDDY: Exactly.

IN: But we haven’t got the resources at ACE, so there’s this divide. Not in aims, or goals, or values, but in the resources etc. So -

BIDDY: And through the CAE, even before there were regions, we used to get out in the sort of, what then became the Central Region. But in that inner city area, we had a very strong network of ALBE workers. So we could meet, I have a feeling it was about once a month. So we had a lot to do with running professional development, it was open to everybody else. And in terms of referring, in terms of sharing professional development. If anyone was running professional development, it was open to everybody else. And in terms of curriculum development we often did projects together.

So as much as possible, we tried to share the wealth that we had. But there’s no doubt that we knew, for example, that we could have three or four staged adult literacy programs and staged ESL programs. Whereas at Carringbush, or somewhere like that, within the one class there’d be all the adult literacy students, all the ESL students. And we knew it was far more demanding than what we were able to do.

So we were always in awe of the teachers in the smaller community places, because they had to do the whole spectrum in the one class. And so we always felt their tutors had to be super duper, duper. You know, to be able to do that. And - and with far less resources in every sense, not only in ….. And in our program we could offer in the Adult Literacy program, Psychology, Australian History, Australian Studies, Human Studies, Peace Studies. You know, and we knew the other programs couldn’t do that.

So we did feel quite well endowed, but we also had a strong sense of responsibility to share that as much as possible without taking a domineering role. A tricky thing, you know, to actually work with other people when there’s quite a strong resources difference like that.
IN: Yes. We used to come in there for union things I remember, when I first started. And we saw the CAE, from my perspective, more like a parent in a way, you know. So there was that ‘Oh they’re lucky, but they’re the same as us but they’re, you know, like a …

BIDDY: The size meant that we could do projects, we could take on projects.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: We could get statewide money projects to do this because we had both the size there, you know, the sort of the critical mass, as you might say. But we also were involved in a lot of networks. I know most of the projects I did from there, I already knew people all round the State because of CAE. And in the past, before I was with CAE officially had a role, a lead agency role. It wasn’t officially so when I was still there but there’d been a tradition.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: Of offering I suppose, redistributing, you know, the wealth that the CAE relatively speaking. But I was always conscious of the smaller providers and always saw them as equals in terms of their teaching capacity and their wishes. And used to marvel at what they could do on their very meagre resources.

IN: And in a way they were similar, but the resources and the venues are the big difference.

BIDDY: Yes. I saw the ethos as similar. I saw a real, at our network meetings, I saw that as a gathering of kindred spirits. Very much so.

IN: Same background. Yes.

Do you think that there’s a huge difference between the ACE you saw when you started, I mean, you can say CAE or whatever. And the way now.

BIDDY: But since then I’ve worked in a lot of different ACE.

IN: You’ve got the whole range. Yes.

Do you see - because I’m trying to sort of plot change and I’m seeing that there are two different types of attitudes to the change from people. And I’m just wondering if you had actually noticed real change. Where you think it’s coming from. Or just, from your angle, just your opinion.

BIDDY: Well, what I do see is people having to make really difficult decisions, people who are working in ACE organizations. Particularly if I think of somebody like you in the role that you’re in as the co-ordinator or manager. Having to make really difficult decisions about the direction the ACE organization is going to go in. Because I see a lot more - a much greater range of choices and pressures. And people can’t do all things.

IN: And you think we’re trying to?

BIDDY: Yes. ………….and trying. Well I see them saying ‘Well so maybe we can’t. So maybe we do what we’re good at or what we think this community most needs’. And I see those as very painful choices.

Some I suppose, the ends of the spectrum I’m talking about, are equivalent courses that are employment focused. It’s relatively, motivated relatively advantaged students.

That’s one end of the spectrum. The other end of the spectrum is people who - programs and students with - know they want to do something, they’re not quite sure what they want to do, but they want to take a step from where they are somewhere, somehow, doing something. But it is nowhere near as explicit or as clear a pathway as somebody who comes in and says ‘I want to do
these VCE subjects’, or ‘I want to do Certificate II in something’ or “I want to get into that TAFE course and how do I do it?’. That’s one end it seems to me.

The other is the people who feel ‘I just want to do something, you know, I want to learn something, I want to be part of something, but I don’t know where to start’. You couldn’t put them in, you know, say, ‘well this is obviously the pathway. You need this here’.

I see people struggling along that whole spectra about where to put energy. Especially as funding tends to favour one end of the spectrum, more and more it seems than the other. But people still want to be true to that tradition of access and community development,

I do see the opposite big change. And I do see people making, organizations making decisions about that. And the positive side is the emergence of some really strong organizations, ACE organizations, as a result of some hard thinking and some hard choices. But they’ve each got their own distinct identity. So if you think of places like Moreland Adult Ed., PRACE, Olympic, Glenroy, you know, these are organizations - and there were equivalents in other regions, who said ‘Let’s look at our history, lets look at our conditions, lets look at where we are now, lets look at the possibilities for the future.

How would we identify ourselves’. In other words, what’s going to be at the core of our identity and what are the programs and other aspects of our organization that are going to embody and express that.

So I do see the people just can’t float along that. They really have to be quite decisive about the - who they are and what they want to stand for and do, as a result of that. And I do see some people really bruised in this whole process. Like, people who don’t want to do the AQTF, but that means then, you know, they can’t do the alternative programs. Which then means they feel they’re staying true to something really, really vital to them. But are they being seen then as somehow second class in some way?

So the - I do see that sort of, that’s a big change to me. That sense of the consequences of the choices you make branding you in some way.

And I do see - though there’s one organization that I’d rather not name, but it’s not in Northern Region. But when people started doing Workplace Training, for example, they say it’s really split this organization in two. What we do is, the days we do our Workplace Training, you know, we put on our suits, we go out and use one set of language and then we come back and do our community education. And we wear different clothes and we talk in a different way.

Now I think they see that as being virtuous. I see that as being quite - could be an identity crisis or a bit of a split personality for the organization. And there’s an implicit proclamation that one’s superior to the other, you know. So I mean …. be a difficult choice organizations have to make with –

The spectrum has broadened well beyond anything it has before. Which has brought in chances for people to make all sorts of combinations and permutations from all those choices. Some have relished that, others haven’t. You know, people like Alphalink have made wonderful new combinations. Others have really, I think, struggled with that and feel like they’re drowning. So -

IN: You’ve summed that up really well. Yeah. I think even people who seem to be coping sometimes have a sense of the drowning. You know, because there are just too many things to cope with. Without the resources.

BIDDY: And I think absolutely, Meg , in order that - it’s demanded so much of the leadership position. Like, you know, I was at the CAE, I could focus on curriculum development and professional development. One of the reasons I left them was that was starting to change. And I think now particularly the people in the leadership position such as yourself, and as the people on your committee have identified, have to be so good at so many different things. And far more than any one person can possibly do.

IN: Yes. Yes.
BIDDY: So the dilemma then is, do I do a whole lot of things half well or, you know, or do I do a whole lot of things as well as I can. I’m only one person with only a certain amount of time and energy. Or do I focus on the things I do well and believe in and realize the consequences on the others. Or do I try and bring in some way, through the committee or through creating positions or through restructuring the whole organization, a different way of redistributing that. But they’re all good hard decisions. And there’s not a lot of, it seems to me, emphasis given to that thinking time. Which is the basis of everything. Like if we don’t have time to reflect on these big, hard decisions and make these decisions on the run. We live with the consequences of half thought out decisions.

IN: …………….. always making those decisions. Yeah.

BIDDY: And I see things like the clusters I think, have enabled some opportunity for people to pause for a while, to think about what’s going on, identify priorities, to consider and plan around together. It seems to me to be a good move.

IN: And they got rid of it this year.

BIDDY: I know. I know. It seemed like -

IN: It was a good idea at the time.

BIDDY: Yes. And I’ve had a bit to do with clusters in different regions, not just in the Northern Region. And I saw them as such a positive move for people, again like you, who have so much in common but don’t really often have a chance to meet.

IN: That networking aspect. Yes.

BIDDY: Yes. But also a bit of money behind that to, you know, make the decisions about priorities. And to do something, you know, whatever it was. So there’s hundreds, there’s dozens of examples of what people ………. important area ………. You can’t sort of ………. the person in the leadership position. Take cognizance of everything that was going on, make policies coming in that come through the Internet or through the post, through to the day to day needs.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: Yes. Like, you could spend your whole time just keeping up with what’s going on. Much less evaluating it all. And then much less for what do we do here - than we have now in this place. So that’s a huge change. The range.

IN: It’s sorting the amount of material and trying to go somewhere with it.

BIDDY: Exactly.

IN: It was much less complex in the past. And much less complex and much smaller spectrum of activities and issues.

BIDDY: Well for me each of the words is important, Adult - Community - Education. I suppose too, I mean, as we were saying before, any term includes something and excludes other things. Because I’d love the word Further Education in there too. So let’s just not stay on that for the moment.

I love it because it’s adults. I love it that you’re working with people who’ve had enough life experience to be able to start reflecting on it and making some key decisions about their own lives. And that we look after adults at all life stages, from all backgrounds, and all with the life experience to contribute to whatever is happening. So there’s this sense of working with people at critical moments in their adult life.
The **Community** aspects, I think, are community development is a really important part of community education. Though I do see it as a group, a collective effort. To engage with the local community in a whole range of ways. And to join in the **fellowship** or **solidarity** with other community organizations in that neighbourhood or beyond. Who further some vision of a more humane, or just a more healthy community. And the Education - and the Education for me is about people having the chance to think about the big ideas, the capacities we need to realize the **visions** we have for ourselves and our society. And to join that, to turn that thinking into some sort of personal and collective action. So the education for me is that chance to just step back a little bit and to look at where we are. Look at the world we’re living in. Look at the world we’re living in and saying ‘Is this who we want to be, is this how we wanted it to be’? If not, ‘What changes, what differences do we want to make and how do we do that. What sort of capacities do I need, what sort of - what do I need to learn, to do, to be, to think, to get there? To make that happen’.

**IN:** Yeah. That’s great.

**BIDDY:** So each of those words is really important to me. And the three all come together in different ways, in different places, at different times, for different reasons.

**IN:** A shift in the emphasis. Yeah. And what don’t you like? Just - go on - tell me what you don’t like.

**BIDDY:** What don’t I like. Well, sometimes I suspect it can be - in some places it can be a bit of a move towards **parochialism**. You know what I mean. Like definitely cut off and thinking -

**IN:** Glorying in it.

**BIDDY:** Glorifying in it. Yes. And saying ‘We don’t need anyone else to our ………’. The outside world is a big, bad world. There can be a tendency towards that, more in the country than in the city though, I think. And there can be a bit of **anti-intellectualism**. It can be a bit of a sense of ‘We don’t want to be doing all this talking’. You know, and thinking ‘We just want to do it, we just want to do it’.

**IN:** That’s right. Action. Yeah.

**BIDDY:** So there’s a bit of a, you know, I think, I mean That’s in a lot of places. But if organizations get too small, or too cut off, or too embittered. They’re, I suppose, the things that are dangers.

**IN:** Yes. And you see that. But sometimes it’s a cycle, I think.

**BIDDY:** I don’t think in the metropolitan areas very much to be honest. It’s more I see in the country. And less and less of that too I think. Because people who think like that tend to leave. And then other people tend to get appointed.

**IN:** Yes.

**BIDDY:** Sorry …………

**IN:** No. Just checking I’ve got enough tape left. I’ve got another one there, I’ll try that. Right you’ve sort of answered that one. So I was interested to hear - one of the things I’ve discovered, which wasn’t something I’d expected to discover, that makes it fascinating, is the multiple roles of people in ACE. You know, when I started this I thought now I’ll interview some students, some teachers and some committee, volunteers. But suddenly I’m finding that people have done all four. An amazing percentage of people. And that’s asking staff, asking volunteers. So I asked staff members the other day, thinking they’d only ever been a staff member. And they said ‘Oh yes. But I’m a volunteer on the committee over in this other suburb’ And
'Oh no. I started out as -' and 'Oh no. You didn’t always but there’s a place down the road. I’ve done multimedia up there’. So -

BIDDY: Many, many roles.

IN: And the best part is what you’ve just said just backs that up. Because I had this perception of being ……… of becoming a …………, worked at the CAE maybe and done the ACE thing and that’s strictly as a staff member. I know you’ve done a bit as a volunteer. But you’ve actually even said you were a student.

BIDDY: Yes. Yes.

IN: So - do you find that interesting?

BIDDY: It is interesting.

IN: That people are engaged ………. And not only in one organization. But maybe Diamond Valley because it’s a little bit more geographically isolated, not in rural terms. But if you lived around here say, in Coburg. You might nip down to Brunswick or up to Fawkner or, you know what I mean? Just on the tram. I’m finding that fascinating.

BIDDY: And I think both simultaneously and over times. People might be doing it at the time and they’ve done it over time. And I think all of those. I’m a great believer that our selves are made up of multiple identities at any one time. And that whatever - you know, if we’re a mother, if we’re a friend or a neighbour, if we’re an ACE committee member or whatever. All of those roles goes into every other role.

IN: That’s right. Yes.

BIDDY: And even though we might be focusing on a particular aspect of our life. It’s not like we say ‘Let’s focus in on the mother bit. Oh well, these other bits have to go to sleep now’. They all come in. And so if we have been a committee member and a student and a staff member. All of them comes in whichever aspect it is coming to the fore at that particular time. And I think like - if you think of it all like knitting together like this. You’ve got this very strong fabric.

IN: That’s right. Yes.

BIDDY: Exactly. Exactly.

IN: I’ve talked to a couple of people mainly at RMIT and a couple at NMIT. And although I haven’t done anything further on it or collated it up. I haven’t seen this phenomena. They’ve said ‘Oh we’ve done PD’, when I’ve said ‘Are you enrolled in anything?’, that’s what they’ve seen themselves as a staff member who has done PD. So they may have enrolled in a course at their own institute or another one but for professional development and not engaging as in say an ACE course.

BIDDY: I think a lot of the people who work in ACE, of course, are working part-time or in casual positions. So their lives generally are a lot more fluid. Somebody who’s working in a TAFE college quite often is working full-time.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: So there’s little - a lot more of their time is focused in one place.

IN: One place. Yes.

BIDDY: It would be interesting how many of the people in TAFE colleges, because a lot have, have worked in the ACE sector before being in the TAFE college, of after. So I think
life stage in a person is quite important. There aren’t that many people who stay in ACE for their whole lives. Especially if they need the income.

IN: Yes. Yes.

BIDDY: You just can’t - Very few people can work full-time in the ACE sector. So a lot of people very reluctantly leave the ACE sector and go to the TAFE sector, for better working conditions. And then of course, I think well, they haven’t got the same - very different life stage thing, to be able to take on a number of roles.

IN: Yes. As a志愿者 or whatever. Exactly. That’s right.

BIDDY: I should say just - I mean it’s not connected with that, but I was originally a secondary school teacher. You’re right I was a secondary - And I did teach for about seven years in secondary schools. So that is my background. As an English teacher.

IN: Yes. And was that in the State school system?

BIDDY: Yes. In the tech. school system. One year at Korumburra High School but then the rest at tech. schools.

IN: Oh, that’s interesting.

Some of the questions - you’ve already answered, OK, those sections. So I’m not going ……… as a student. You’ve sort of taken these roles on and - The question I had here about people who’ve gone to TAFE or university, as well as ACE. You know, how would you have - Just quickly sum up the difference between maybe TAFE, university and ACE. Or do you think there are so many exceptions it’s not worth defining them.

BIDDY: Well of course, all of these have changed so much over time. I mean university - I mean university is a particular thing now. It’s brief has broadened so much as have TAFE colleges and ACE. But -

IN: So that’s a commonality then isn’t it? They’ve all broadened their brief.

BIDDY: Absolutely. And I see TAFE and ACE having a very - it’s a bit like Judaism and Christianity. I mean, they do have quite a lot of common ground. Because that FE in TAFE has a strong tradition very similar to the Adult Community Education tradition and ethos. And I know people all round the State in the FE departments, whether they’re Adult Literacy or Liberal Arts or VCE or whatever, they are very committed to those ideals that we were talking about before. But of course they are in a much - they’re in a minority in their TAFE organization. And that does make a difference. I mean, I do think there are groups within those TAFE organizations that are as committed and conscientious and compassionate and capable as anything I see in ACE. But they’re in that bigger vocational training environment. And so that’s a big influence on them.

BIDDY: I think the fact that TAFE college are also TAFE institutes became quite separate from each other too, has been a big influence. Because it used to be it’d see itself much more
like a TAFE culture. Now I think each of the organizations have become huge businesses. And that has shaped the environment within each of those organizations and they have much less sense of a common mission now, I think. I think the pressure on ACE organizations to be small businesses is a very mixed blessing too. Because if you bring in a corporate template to something that is not measured through the eyes of economic rationalism, it creates a huge sense of confusion and trying to bring together - trying to have two things that are actually quite contradictory co-exist. So it’s trying to do something impossible.

IN: Yes. Yes.

BIDDY: So I see the same economic rationalist forces bearing down on all the three organizations. I think they’ve all got that in common. Having to deal with that, those three sectors. But they’ve dealt with it in different ways. I think the ACE sector of all has tried hardest to keep - the, I suppose you might call community development project, for want of a better word, to the fore. At great cost to itself and its workers I have to add.

IN: That’s right. Because there’s no money for a pay rise for the teachers in ACE.

BIDDY: No. No. No.

IN: They’re doing exactly, well nearly, the same job.

BIDDY: They seem to be doing more and more.

IN: ............... basically the same job as a TAFE teacher. ........or somebody. ‘They don’t deserve the same pay. Because they’re not doing the same as a TAFE teacher’. And in a way that’s true, classes are smaller, aren’t they? But often the clients are more diverse and more needy.

BIDDY: I’d have to see what that person meant. Because I …….

IN: Oh, I’ll have to ask Jude about it. Because I know she said it at a meeting.

BIDDY: I’m sure that the TAFE union has, you know, argued that ‘This is what teachers do and this is why they deserve this money’. It would be interesting to see what the - how the description compares with what is put through for ACE teachers. Because I would argue, if it’s on educational grounds, both are doing equally. ........... The people work in and out and so many people work in both.

IN: I think they were meaning the size of classes. And that’s certainly valid. But - Yeah. I’m not sure if it holds true for everywhere. A very high percentage of concessions, maybe in TAFE they do it, well with waived fees for multiple disadvantages.

BIDDY: Yes. Well, some of the TAFE classes I’ve taken have been big. And I couldn’t have distinguished them from ACE classes. In the sense that we had a huge range ........

IN: In what you’ve got to deliver.

BIDDY: Yes. So - But then there are more resources there. You’ve got a big library and you’ve got, you know, a canteen and you’ve got a whole lot of other things, you know, that you don’t have.

IN: We’ve got a couple of rooms in the back of the library.

BIDDY: Plus councillors, you know. Exactly.

IN: I was just going to ask you if you knew about the Diploma of Further Ed?
BIDDY: Mm

IN: I really wanted to ask you a couple of questions about your own Framework.

BIDDY: OK.

IN: Because they are distinct from anybody else’s questions that I’m going to ask.

BIDDY: OK.

IN: A couple of the teachers I’ve made a reference to the question ‘Do you feel people tend to forget …’s Framework. And some people were very, as you know very excited about it when it came out. And we all felt it legitimised what we did and we all got very tearful about that at the time, you know. And looking at Padma’s photos we were going ‘Ooh’, you know.

And there were still some people who were there, mainly I think oldies, you know, all that stuff with IT for older non-English speakers, you know. All the things that had not been given any credit before. And but now I’m finding when I went to a meeting the other day that people are saying ‘You’ve got to find some way to legitimise the Further Education we do’. That was actually said at a Northern Met meeting and I thought - I expected a couple of people to immediately jump up and said ‘Well why don’t you just justify it in terms of Delia’s Framework’. So do you think people are forgetting and we need to remind them that there’s ……..

BIDDY: You mean the Framework not the Diploma of Further Ed?

IN: No I was going to talk about that. But I decided your Framework was more important.

BIDDY: OK. It’s hard to judge. It’s very hard to judge.

IN: I’d hate to think. Because the impact it had when it came out ….. that as people have moved in and out of the sector. Do you get a sense of that?

BIDDY: I don’t think there’s been a sort of consistent momentum from the Centre or from the Regions, to support it as a statement about Adult Community Education. I don’t think.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: I think individuals carry it in their minds and in their hearts and in their work. But I don’t think there has been an official, you know, sustained momentum. And I don’t know if that’s a resistance to it or whether it’s ignorance, you know, not knowing about it. Or having other priorities. You know, like if you’re going to be concentrating on non-educational issues. What I would see as non-education issues. Maybe something like this just doesn’t come to mind, you know, at an official level. I’m now talking at an official level. If you’re concentrating on setting up partnerships or if you’re concentrating on getting the AQTF in place. Do you know what I mean?

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: Like if you’re concentrating on those sorts of things and not on what’s actually happening in the learning -

IN: Classroom environment. Yes.

BIDDY: You’re probably not thinking about, you know, what’s a good way of actually keeping that to the fore. So I get the sense - I mean it’s only very vague - that officially it hasn’t been sustained. I think that it’s sustained very erratically probably in the places depending on who knows it and what they know about it.

IN: So I know it’s used a lot, for example, in all the tertiary courses that people do. At Monash, at V.U., at Melbourne Uni. You know, people who are doing any sort of adult
education qualifications. I know it’s used a lot because there isn’t anything similar to it. But I don’t think - I think it is incidentally used a lot. But I don’t think it’s officially supported.

IN: One year, in our ACE funding, we were told to justify what we were running.

BIDDY: That’s what I mean.

IN: According to it and plotted against it. And the next year it wasn’t mentioned, and hasn’t been mentioned since. So I was quite saddened about that. And I think that a lot of people were excited by it and still, as you said, hold that sort of like in your heart, you know, the first time that we were legitimate is how we saw it.

BIDDY: And also an alternative to CBT. See I mean, it quite consciously was conceived as a project, as a chance for Adult Community Further Education. But Further Education in particular.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: To stand its ground. To say this is the ground we stand on. It’s different from vocational training. We don’t want to squeeze ourselves into - we can’t squeeze ourselves into the competency based training. We need a different language, we need a different discourse, we need a different ethos, we need a different framework for doing that.

So it was quite consciously, at an official level, conceived for that reason. And as far as I know there’s still not an alternative to CBT for people working in adult education. So it may need refreshment.

IN: That’s what I was just going to suggest. Now we could ……. on that. And we could get you -

BIDDY: I mean even the documents themselves might need some refreshing, you know.

IN: Oh all right. We need to do a project for ACFE.

BIDDY: Because it’s five years. Maybe longer. It seems amazing to me.

IN: Yes. But I think there’s such a shrinking population that, you know, the old timers have - all sort of have held onto it. And you know, we can still do that little chart, you know, with that multiplicity, you know, stuff. Because I’m not teaching it so I must admit I couldn’t sit down and do it like the first couple of years. But - Yeah. I think, you know, it needs that reminder and how easy it is to apply it to what you’re doing. Not - ‘Oh my God. Here’s another system we’ve got to learn’.

BIDDY: You know, like 101 criteria and elements.

IN: Yes. That’s right. ……. in pages of the AQTF to get ‘Now come on where’s the documentation’. It’s not that. You can produce it sort of in a more of a table.


IN: But you can just plot it so easily by just making notes in a table.

BIDDY: What I think is it’s great strength, actually is the curriculum design model. Which is we’ve had learning outcomes for a while. We’ve talked a bit about recognition outcomes. But it’s stretched that beyond certificates, you know. It can be your learning journal. Or it can be an IT folio that you make, etc., etc.

The pathways outcomes - it’s more than going to a job or another course. It’s, you know, Do you know that you can go into RMIT and have a coffee, on your own. And underneath all that is what are the education practices that are going to make that
possible. See there’s the training packages forbade any talk about how you’re
going to do it, you know.

IN: Yes.

BIDDY: So I think that model, and I noticed now that’s coming back and back, and back.

IN: They’re discussing it. Yes.

BIDDY: CBT is going to - it’s going away. It’s dying a natural death. Nobody will ever say it
was a terrible mistake, but it will just die away. Because it’s not doing what it was meant
to do.

So I think that curriculum development and it’s also very simple. People who’ve never
done any teaching and people who’ve done lots and lots of teaching, all respond to that
and find that really helpful. So that they can go back and forth and saying ‘Oh well, if
I really value this sort of outcome for somebody. What does that mean I do in the
classroom?’

IN: And how do I legitimise it to other people?

BIDDY: Exactly.

IN: We always knew we could say ‘Look, we saw this woman, she came in’-. And they’d
go warm and fuzzy, warm and fuzzy. And you’d know it wasn’t warm and fuzzy.

Because her life had changed.

BIDDY: So it’s saying each of these should be up there with the learning outcomes, you know.

IN: And it’s not taking away from the educational outcomes either. ....... It’s broadening
it.

BIDDY: Exactly. Yes. That I think - I think that’s actually had it’s influence in all sorts of ways
may never, ever be traced. I actually see that more and more. So getting some of those
terms around, and especially the definitions of some of those terms. You know,
stretching them a bit beyond the more like articulated - I always think of those trucks,
you know, they’re all firmly attached to each other. There’s not much room to move.

IN: Yes. Yes. And yet there is movement there. And it fits in well with the CGEA.

Whether you want accreditation besides or not. You can slot it all in. Like the Diploma
of Further Ed., which of course we run. It fitted in with everything, you know, the
lifelong learning, that stuff, the law stuff. And, you know, all of that sort of came
together in all of those things packaged. Do you feel that?

BIDDY: Yes. Very much so. Yes.

IN: The aims are all -

BIDDY: It was I mean, I see it mainly as like a credo or a declaration of beliefs. A vision of what
we think our work is. I mean, it would be interesting to go back and have a look at
it. As I say, maybe it needs -some sort of a -

IN: But I don’t think it needs changing, in terms of what we’re doing. But maybe just
bringing back to the fore with a bit of publicity or something--

End of tape—decided not to repeat last few words and record thanks

IN: Thank you for that. I’ll type this up and send a copy to you.
Interview with Frank: Coburg in May 2003

Can you tell me a bit about yourself? Like where you were born and about your family.

I was born in Middle Park. We lived there till I was nine, then we went out to Bayswater.

And that meant you changed schools?

Yeah. Changed schools.

Was that a problem for you? Or -

No. Not really.

Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Yes. I had a sister.

Did you get along OK? Or -

Oh. I didn’t take much notice of her most of the time.

So there was no sibling stuff? Not really?

No. Especially. She’s a girl so, you know.

And what about your parents?

They were - They were Communists, actually. So, this was in the 50’s, when I was growing up. They had to tell me not to tell anybody that they were Communists.

Because well, everyone hated the ‘Commos’ in those days. Probably still do. So I got a bit of a paranoid streak going at the time, I think. Never really left me.

And you were pretty young when you realized this? Or - Different, I mean, being different.

Yeah. About seven or eight. They told me.

Oh. OK. And what did it mean in your family? Having them as Communists.

Well, I never talked about it. So it didn’t mean anything much.

Oh. Right.

When I went to Uni, you know, Vietnam and all that stuff. So me mates thought it was quite impressive to have Communists as parents. So that sort of got a bit of status then. So for a while -

But not as a child?

No.

Yes. So did it affect anything else in the family? Like your family life or - You know, did they have meetings at home or anything you feel was - made you feel different?

Oh. They had meetings at home. But I never took much notice.

OK. Good. OK. So what would you say were the things that formed you into being the person you are now? Made you, you know, your personality, some of your experiences or something.
FR: My genes.  
IN: Oh. So genetic. Well then, your parents were doubly important. And they were Australian?  
FR: Yep. Oh, my mother was English. She came out here when she was two or something.  
IN: So. Yeah. OK. So you’re a child of a migrant parent. Only an English speaking one.  
FR: Didn’t really count.  
IN: Didn’t count. OK. And were you - Would you have called yourself a happy or a relaxed sort of child, when you were growing up? Or - as you were growing?  
FR: No. Pretty anxious.  
IN: Anxious. OK. What caused that anxiety?  
FR: My genes.  
IN: OK. So you’re genetically an anxious person?  
FR: That’s right.  
IN: So were your parents anxious? Do you reckon?  
FR: Oh. The old man was a bit nervous. Yeah.  
IN: And do you think he had a lot of influence on your life?  
FR: Not really.  
IN: What did he do for a living?  
FR: He was a proof reader for the Herald.  
IN: Oh. OK. OK. And did that - Do you think that impacted on your literacy maybe, and stuff? The fact that, you know, reading and all those things was sort of really prioritised in your family.  
FR: Well, we always had books around. They always gave me Russian books to read.  
IN: In Russian?  
FR: No. From International Publishing House or something. Moscow. ……  
IN: How would you describe -  
FR: Oh. We had Peter Pan and stuff as well.  
IN: Peter Pan. OK.  
FR: And Blinky Bill.  
IN: Good. Good. Good old Aussie Blinky. Can you describe your early years of schooling? Did you feel positive about your primary, secondary -  
FR: Oh. Yeah. Breezed through it.
A breeze.

I had a good memory, so it suited me down to the ground.

So you liked, really liked schooling?

Till I went to university and I needed to understand something. And that was the end of me.

So you actually went to university.

Yep.

Yep. OK. And you didn’t feel - You weren’t one of those kids who hated school, going to school, or felt negative about things, you know, peer stuff?

No. None of that. Not really. No. I was pretty much in control.

Well, that’s really good. None of the rest of us never felt in control. I’m glad you did.

Well, except for girls. Not when it came to girls.

My wife got involved. And she used to come home and talk about what was going on.

OK.

I sort of learnt about it from her. I suppose you’d have to say.

OK. And why did you get involved? Yourself.

Well. She needed someone to give her a hand with a bit of the IT. So I thought it might shut her up if I went along with it.

And so, I’m often picking up on this bit of a family connection. So you know, the same thing with you as a lot of people. There is a family connection.


Oh right.

He did a couple of - What did he do? Workplace Training and a bit of stuff. And he came along to give us a hand with the IT. For a while, as a volunteer. Yeah.

Oh good. So you did volunteer work for a while. The you took some paid work. Is that right?

No. I went straight to paid work, I think.

OK.

Yeah.

OK. How would you have described ACE when you first became involved in it? Would you -
FR: Like a Mother’s Club really. Is that all right?

IN: No. That’s frightful.

FR: It’s gone that -

IN: No. No. It’s all right. Was it the same or different to other types of schooling? Would you say?

FR: Oh. Different. Different.

IN: Different. OK. And what were those differences? Can you -

FR: Well, I’d say, a lot of the people have been through some pretty heavy or, you know, traumatic sort of life experiences. So they needed a lot of propping up.

IN: Oh. OK. And can you give me some examples? Or have you got anything -

FR: Oh. Look, there was one bloke, one bloke from Iran. Told this story of how his younger brother, this is back in Iran, you know, when he was living with his family. His younger brother had written some pretty mild political type letter to one of the newspapers. This was in the days of the Ayatollah, I guess. And before they knew it, the secret police were at the door. They dragged the young kid out, hung him from a post outside. And the family wasn’t allowed to touch him till his body had decomposed. And if they had, the same thing would have happened to them.

IN: Yes.

FR: A nightmare. There was this - There was another young bloke who, when he was a little boy, his mother, his mother left the old man and they went to South Australia. And she met some other bloke. So he had two younger, you know, half brothers and sisters or something. And one of his memories from over there was, sitting on the lawn with these two little kids, picking glass out of them. Because the old – his stepfather had thrown them all through a window.

IN: Oh dear.


IN: God.

FR: So he pinched some money from his mother or something and found a public phone and rang up the old man back here. And the old man came over and got him back. So that’s how he escaped from that.

IN: Poor boy.

FR: Yes. Unbelievable.

IN: Yes.

FR: But when he got back here, apparently the old man bought him a big dog. Because, I suppose, he just wanted to give him a bit of confidence or something.

And they used to go out hunting with one of the old man’s mates. And one particular time, the old man was crook or something. So his mate took him and, you know, this young bloke and the dog. Took him back to his place and, you know, they were going to go hunting from there. He got him inside and he said ’Now pull down your pants and bend over’.

IN: Oh dear.
FR: But like this - The young bloke said the dog got in-between the two of them and wouldn’t let this bloke near him. Which - Well it’s -

IN: Amazing, that the dog knew.

FR: Yes. So we all need a dog. Don’t we?

IN: Yes.

FR: But then, this young bloke, you know. He was, I reckon he could have - He obviously, he could be pretty aggro because he turned on - He and the dog turned on the house and trashed the house. And, of course, this bloke was terrified of the dog. So he couldn’t come near them. Trashed the house and then walked back to Melbourne. To the old man’s house.


FR: So that’s, you know, that’s the sort of experience of some of these people had. That ended up in ACE. You know, what’s happened to them.

IN: And why do you think they’ve come and ended up in ACE then? If you’ve heard, you know, those stories. Do you think that’s an element of why they’ve ended up there? Or, or is it just interesting? You know?

FR: Well, they obviously hear from mates or something. They must hear from somebody. You know, people with those sort of experiences, you know, they’re getting together. So and they know they’re not going to be judged if they come out with them.

IN: Yes.

FR: So they feel comfortable, you know, with other people who’ve had the same sort of experiences.

IN: Experiences. And do you reckon that would happen in other types of educational organizations? Like if you go to the TAFE or uni. or whatever.

FR: No. You’ve just got to do your assignments and pass your exams. And go down the pub afterwards, I suppose. If you’re into that sort of thing. But. No. No. Tutors and lecturers aren’t, aren’t interested in that sort of stuff.

IN: And that was a few years ago.

FR: Yeah.

IN: Yes. Would you describe it the same way now? Or do you think that -

FR: No. No. That’s - It’s sort of becoming more professional. I think, you know, that sort of thing’s still there. But. No. There’s a lot more administration, funding and probity and, you know, all this sort of stuff.

IN: Yes.

FR: Goes on now. It’s, you know, it’s sort of becoming more like a mini little TAFE or something. You know. But they still get that support that they don’t get anywhere else.

IN: Do you think that they all still get that? Or do you think that’s gone?

FR: Yeah. I’d say. Oh. Well some of the classes, like the Workplace Training classes, they’re not after that anyway. Probably.
FR: You know, those sort of - The classes used to be ……are still. They’re still doing that stuff, I think.

IN: Yes.

FR: Although, I don’t know.

IN: Would you say it’s better or worse than it used to be? Can you -

FR: Better or worse. Better in some ways, I suppose.

IN: Yes.

FR: Worse in others.

IN: Oh. Yes.

FR: Worse in others.

IN: OK.

FR: OK. Yeah. Don’t know.

IN: OK. That’s fine. How would you describe a TAFE to someone who wanted adult education? As distinct from ACE. A TAFE.

FR: A TAFE. If you want a qualification, you go do a TAFE.

IN: And what makes it different to a uni. then?

FR: It’s free, isn’t it? Is it still free?

IN: You’ll have to look on RMIT’s website. Not quite free. They do have fees. Yes. They do have fees. But you mean university is sort of a higher cost thing?

FR: Yeah. More, you know, if you want to do - If you want to do for the serious money, you go to a university. Don’t you?

IN: OK. If you’ve got less serious money, you go to a TAFE.

FR: If you want to be a lawyer or a doctor, you’ve got to go to a university. That’s what I mean.

IN: OK. Although I think plumbers are just as much ……

FR: Yes. I do.

IN: And how would you describe ACE? If someone said to you ‘What the hell is ACE’?

FR: It’s - has education for adults that missed out early on. Or school didn’t do anything for them. So they sort of - If you dropped out then you want to pick things up again. Yeah. Start off with ACE.

IN: Yep. OK. Is there anything you like about ACE?

FR: Like. Well, see it’s a bit hard for me because I haven’t been in - I’ve sort of never done a class.

IN: No. That’s right. Because you’ve always been staff.
FR: Yeah.

IN: Staff.

FR: Yes. The money’s nice.

IN: Yep. Not as well paid or -

FR: Oh. No. I’m only part-time anyway. So it doesn’t really -

IN: OK. Well, what don’t you like about ACE?

FR: The pressure it puts the managers in. Lot of stress.

IN: A lot of stress. Thank you.

FR: It’s getting more, that side of things. Instead of - More or less.

IN: Do you see a need for ACE in future?

FR: Oh. Yeah. There’ll always be those sort of people. That need that sort of thing.

IN: You mean as in?

FR: Support and, you know.

IN: Yeah.

FR: Getting and dealing with people with the same sort of backgrounds.

IN: So you’re describing it more in terms of people support than anything else. Is that how you see ACE? As somewhere people go to get support--because that’s how you’re describing it, not me.

FR: Well, obviously there’s, you know, computer classes and Workplace Training and that sort of stuff. Where people just want to get a qualification.

IN: Yeah.

FR: I don’t think they’re looking for the same sort of support. I’m thinking of the AMEP now. Isn’t it? They just want to learn to speak English. Don’t they? Although I suppose it’s a social thing for them too. Isn’t it?

IN: Yeah. Connecting with what’s happening,

FR: Yes.

IN: You know, about the culture.

FR: Yeah.

IN: Yeah. Have you got any ideas on what ACE could be doing to become better than it is now? You don’t have to answer if-

FR: Not really. No.

IN: OK. OK. And you have never been a student of ACE. Have you?

FR: No.

IN: OK. Because you went to uni. Now you did - What did you do, uni. degree?

IN: Science. And you finished it?

FR: Yeah.

IN: Did you do anything afterwards?

FR: Then I did a Dip. Ed. Then I taught for a year.

IN: And you only taught for one year. Why was that? Can I ask you?

FR: I hated it.

IN: Hated it. OK. What did you hate?

FR: Oh. I could never figure out what to do with the kids that just wanted to throw pencil cases out the window.

IN: The non-academic.

FR: Yeah.

IN: Who are all probably now in ACE. OK. So you left. And what did you do then? After you taught, you went -

FR: I went up the bush and did the hippie thing.

IN: You became a hippie.

FR: Well. No.

IN: Dropped out. You became a hippie.

FR: Yeah.

IN: Who are all probably now in ACE. OK. So you left. And what did you do then? After you taught, you went -

FR: I went up the bush and did the hippie thing.

IN: OK. So you sort of, in a way, went back to schooling. Didn’t you? You know, as in high school.

FR: Yep. The one good thing that came out of teaching was, I saw the perfect job.

IN: That was?

FR: The lab. assistant.

IN: Why did you give that up? Because I know you gave that up.

FR: I’d done it for twenty years and I thought it was time to do something a bit more.

IN: Before I retired.

FR: OK. And you’ve never worked as a volunteer. Or a student. There’s a question for staff. Why did or do you work for ACE? Well, you’ve just mentioned some money. OK. So is that the driving reason why you work for -
Well, originally it was because there was no-one else around that would set up the computers and things.

And if I remember it was VCE.

Yeah. The VASS.

Yes. The VASS VCE computer. That’s right. Yeah. OK. So it - Yeah. Was just your skills really were in demand and -

Yeah. And you haven’t worked in a university?

No. No.

Or a TAFE.

No.

No. OK. What would you say was the biggest influence on the ACE sector since you’ve started?

Computers I suppose. Didn’t have any. Well, only the manager had one. When I started.

Yes. OK.

The others were ……….

I’ve got a couple of IT questions too. So perhaps I could get to those in a minute.

Yeah. In your opinion is ACE under pressure to change?

I wouldn’t know.

Wouldn’t know. OK. I’ve got a couple of IT questions. I’m asking people different questions as you can see, depending on their experience. But you’ve been in IT and not some of the other things we’re discussing.

Can you describe what IT was available when you started in ACE?

Yeah. Well, there was just a - Yeah. It was just the manager had it. Had an old 386 or something. And then someone had donated one of those old things with the green writing on the monitor. And I don’t think we used them, although they might have.

I can’t even remember it.

Kath’s got it.

Oh. Yeah. That’s right. And people - People’s IT skills. How would you describe them when you started in ACE?

Oh. Non-existent.

Non-existent. Yeah. Exactly. And there were no courses or classes at that point?

No. No.

How would you describe it now? IT in ACE. As distinct from high schools or anything else.

Comment [IN577]: ACE-volunteer for IT and VASS

Comment [p578]: VASS admin

Comment [IN579]: Change-IT only manager had 1, a 386 now many

Comment [p580]: Donated a PC

Comment [IN581]: Change-IT nobody had IT skills
FR: How would I describe it. Well, obviously there’s, you know, there’s Certificate IV and stuff they do. Well, that all comes into those sort of things. There’s, you know, there’s beginner computer classes. Isn’t there? For people who don’t know what a mouse is.

IN: Yes.

FR: Then there’s other people just want a more particular thing. And then like, you know, Excel spreadsheets or something. That’s what they want to know. And they might find that out and go away, I suppose.

IN: More about the amount, the number because you did mention there was one PC for the manager.

FR: Yeah. Well, now there’s now ten - Ten computers in every classroom.

IN: OK.

FR: With, you know, English, English programs, ESL programs and IT, you know, media type programs and all sorts of things.

IN: Yes. So that’s been a huge change?


IN: Do you think it’s for better or worse?

FR: Oh. Yeah. Good. Yeah. Well, the Internet. The people, I mean, there’s the Internet these days. If you want to get anywhere.

IN: Yeah. Would you say the IT in ACE is different to other educational sectors?

FR: Oh. I don’t know.

IN: Well, you’ve worked in high schools. So -

FR: They sort of do the VCE subjects. We don’t do that anymore. Oh. No. It is the same sort of programs in schools. So is that what you wanted?

IN: Yes. How about in terms of funding? Would you say ACE and schools get an equitable amount of funding or -

FR: For IT or - ?

IN: Yes. For IT or anything else.

FR: Oh. I don’t know. Schools would get more, I suppose. I’ve never really thought about it, you know.

IN: Yes. OK.

FR: Well, schools - Yes. I suppose schools have two or three hundred computers, the average school. So, I guess, schools get - Well, all right, the budget at the school I used to work for was $50,000 a year for IT. For computers.

IN: For computers and -

FR: And that wasn’t enough.

IN: And how many kids is that? Approximately, in a year.
Well, it started off there were 600 kids. But there’s more than that now. But they didn’t put the budget up.

So there’d be, what 900?

Yeah. I suppose so. Yeah.

Yeah. And. OK. And in ACE the budget would be approximately, although it’s stretched, the actual budget that’s given to ACE organizations.

This is - That’s just the hardware. And, you know, not the teacher’s salaries or anything.

Oh. No. No. No. Just the expenditure on computers. The actual amount that Moreland Adult Ed. got last year for Commonwealth equipment, which is specifically for computers, was $3800. OK.

Any other money has been taken out of program money. Like. Yes. So sometimes if there’s surplus out of say, AMEP program. There’d be upgrading for the computers out of that. But the actual designated amount of money for an enrolment of approximately 500, is $3800. To be shared with all staff, managers and everything. OK.

That’s pretty economical.

I thought you’d like that. That sort of brings it down to the …… No. Thank you for that. Is there any other comment you’d like to make about ACE? Or what do you think? Anything else that occurs to you? Any little stories?

I think that just about covers it. And I’ll have this typed up and give you a copy and if there’s anything you want to remove out of it.

All right.

Thank you for that.

Thank you.
MC: Interview with George in the Coburg Library. Thank you for coming for your interview, George.

G: Pleasure.

MC: You know you can stop this at any point.

G: Pleasure.

MC: And I’ll give you a copy of it typed up and you can choose if you don’t want to say anything or have it removed. OK?

G: OK. Understood.

MC: Ah. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? Like where you were born, about your family or something like that.

G: Originally I came from New Zealand. Auckland, I was born.

MC: Yeah.

G: Been here since ’74.

MC: Mm Hm.

G: Um. I’ve got a sister in Queensland. I don’t have a father, his died.

MC: Recently or as a child? When you were a child.

G: Many, many years ago.

MC: So when you were a child, or a very young man.

G: Uh. A young man. I’m still a young man.

MC: Of course. (laughs) Or a younger man.

G: Yeah. That’s the - What else do you want to know there?

MC: Um. Do you think - Why did you come to Australia? Any specific reason or - ?

G: Oh. I was young and adventurous.

MC: Um. Do you think - Why did you come to Australia? Any specific reason or - ?

MC: Oh. Adventure. Oh. I like that. (both laugh) And do you think - Um. You’ve got a sister you said. Just one?

G: Yeah. Do you think having a sister had an impact on your life? Or you know, being an only child would have had more, or something like that?

G: No. ‘Cause I left home pretty early at a very early age. Where I’ve been a sort of a self-made person really. Ah.

MC: Oh. Yes.
G: I still have contact with my sister and we sort of get on very well. But - Um. Presently I’m getting a lot of help from her. But - Um.

MC: Support?


MC: Oh. That’s good. And, um, you left home early. How old is early, was early?

G: Ah. It was fifteen or sixteen or something. Can’t really recall.

MC: OK. And did you leave school early or?

G: It would be Year 11, I think. Yeah.

MC: OK. And was that at the same time? Or was that you kept going to school after you left home or?

G: No. It would have been a bit after.

MC: All right. So you were living away from home when you finished schooling?

G: I was. Yes.

MC: Oh. That’s very adventurous. (both laugh)

G: Gee. I wouldn’t have liked to have done it. (laughs)

MC: Mm. Yeah. Family life can be like that, can’t it? (laugh)

G: Mm.

MC: Yeah. That’s fine. OK. And what do you think helped to make you the person you are now? I mean, your own personality. Any experiences? Whatever?

G: Probably the fact that I have been away from home at such a young age has certainly made me more worldly, and more street wise.

MC: Having to support yourself and all those things?

G: Oh. Absolutely. Yeah. I’ve never really had to rely on anybody. That’s - Ah.

MC: So you’ve always been self-reliant?

G: Yeah.

MC: Yeah. OK. And would you say, when you were growing up, you were a happy person or not necessarily?
G: Oh. Probably no more or less than anybody else. I had my happy moments and my bad moments.

MC: Yeah. We’re all like that. Yeah. And what about your schooling? Where did you go to a primary school? What sort of primary school was it?

G: Um.

MC: Like a State or a private or a Catholic?

G: No. State school. It was pretty large.

MC: Yeah.

G: I didn’t really concentrate too much on my studies. In those days I was more into, more into sport and that sort of stuff. So -

MC: Yes.

G: I wish I had of now.

MC: Yes. Yes.

G: But perhaps I’m making up for it now.

MC: Yeah. Lifelong learning?

G: Yeah.

MC: And what about secondary? What sort of secondary school did you go to?


MC: That’s good. Teachers OK?

G: Yeah. Yes.

MC: And you left in about - ?

G: Oh. Look I’d been a bad boy and -

MC: Oh. You’d been a bad boy?

G: And a good boy. Yeah. But, you know.

MC: Well. Yes. I guess that’s pretty ordinary. (laughs)

G: Yes.

MC: We all have our moments, don’t we? And you didn’t go to tech. or anything? You just went to high school?

G: Oh. We had tech. stuff there. But - Um. In those days.

MC: So it was a mixed sort of tech/high.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

G: Yeah. Yeah.
MC: Yeah. And it was co-ed.
G: Done a bit of metalwork, woodwork and all that sort of stuff.
MC: One of those boys who loves metalwork?
G: Yeah. I had a go at that. Yeah.
MC: Trade stuff.
G: I was more into woodwork than metal, I think.
MC: Oh. Yeah. Yeah.
G: It’s probably how I became a carpenter and -
MC: Oh. I didn’t know you were a carpenter.
G: Yeah. And that - Um. When I left school probably I’ve had a few odd jobs here and there. But that’s been my basic living, right through my life, until a couple of years ago when I fell, fell victim to injury.
MC: Injury. Yeah. Did you do an apprenticeship or ?
G: No. I was with my father in my uncle’s firm. Um. So to speak.
MC: So they didn’t sign you up as an apprentice or anything?
G: No. I didn’t. No.
MC: Yeah. So you were just sort of family?
G: It grew out of family. Yeah.
MC: Do you mind if I just pause this for a moment? Because there’s a -
G: No.
MC: Thanks for that. Um. Right. So how do you feel about your schooling? Were you positive or negative do you think? Or nothing? (laughs)
G: Ah. Oh. I was probably a bit negative really, I suppose.
MC: Yeah.
G: Didn’t take advantage of what it was all about.
MC: And, um - Were there any factors you think caused you to feel negative or ? It wasn’t like your reading or writing or anything? You know what I mean? Was it a literacy thing or ?
G: No.
MC: It was just the kids and the mucking around or the boys or ?
G: No. I don’t think I got the support from home probably.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

MC: Yeah.
G: That I think I should have had.
MC: Yeah. To keep going with no encouragement. Is that what you mean?
G: Well -
MC: Not much.
G: More. Well really, I had a stepfather that was pretty -
MC: Oh. Right.
G: That was pretty hard. He was critical ……
MC: Oh right. So you grew up -
G: Critical or ……
MC: So you grew up with a stepfather rather than your own father?
G: Yes.
MC: Was he dead by then or ?
G: No.
MC: Oh. No. He’d just - There was just a family breakdown. Yeah. Oh. Well. Look an amazing number of people in this -
G: Heaps.
MC: Study have had family - I don’t know, I guess everybody has been touched by family background of breakdown.
G: Mm.
MC: But - Yeah. A lot of people have had one. Yes. So stepfather was a bit of an issue?
G: Mm (nods)
MC: Ah. That doesn’t help when you’re not getting encouraged, does it? That’s -
G: No.
MC: OK. Um. Yes. So you think the main things that formed you maybe are you were able to work, you left school early, all those things? Just as a person.
G: Um. Yeah. I’ve always been a pretty hard worker. So -
MC: Yes.
G: And it’s given me my independence probably.
MC: Yes.
G: You know. It’s, er, put me out in the world there where I’ve learned a lot of other things besides work.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

MC: And when - You said just before about your work. Um. It meant a lot to you, but obviously what you’re talking about is something that happened a few years ago that changed your whole perspective.

G: Injury. Yes.

MC: Yeah. Your injury. And you were injured at work?

G: Yes.

MC: And that’s made you change your whole life, would you say?

G: Oh. I might have been thinking about change before that time, but it’s forced me to change now.

MC: Yeah. Do you reckon it’s been for the positive or for the negative?

G: Injury is always negative.

MC: Negative. (both laugh) There’s a lot of pain involved?

G: Oh. Yes.

MC: Yeah.

G: Yeah. There’s a lot - Oh well. There’s a lot of - It limits me to a lot of things I can’t do anymore. But and now there are things I can, I’ve got time to do. It’s forced me into another direction which - Ah.

MC: Yes.

G: I would have liked to have pursued before, but because of commitments and money and all that sort of thing, you don’t - You don’t move on.

MC: Mm.

G: So it’s forced me to move on in some respects. I suppose in some ways it’s probably a good thing. In other ways it’s not. It hasn’t been a good thing at all.

MC: Yes. And that it’s involved quite a lot of personal hardship, hasn’t it?

G: Absolutely.

MC: Not only the pain?

G: No. Very, very hard.

MC: Yeah. And where did you first find out about ACE? Adult Community Ed. Can you remember where or how or ?

G: Ah. I must have - It must have been the paper or something, I think.

MC: Oh. Yeah.

G: If ever you run ads. there.

MC: Yeah. We sometimes, in the local paper. Yeah.

G: ........
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

MC: And you came to computer class?
G: Yes.
MC: So you just wanted to learn? Did you use a computer at all?
G: Before that?
MC: Mm.
G: I was a dinosaur.
MC: Didn’t even touch one?
G: Didn’t even touch one.
MC: And you came to what? Janeen’s class?
G: Too scared of them. I was too scared of them.
MC: Too scared of them.
G: I was scared of technology.
MC: Yeah. It’s good isn’t it, breaks it down. Now you’re a whiz?
G: Yeah. I’m not a whiz yet.
MC: (laughs)
G: No.
MC: And when you first became involved with ACE - Um. Would you have described it as a different form of schooling or the same? You know, anything to do with the other schooling? How would you?
G: Oh. It’s different. It’s different because it’s a different time in my life too. I don’t know how, whether I can actually match that up because it’s completely different. I’m a different person.
MC: Yes.
G: But - Um. It’s been interesting I must say.
MC: Your journey? (laughs)
G: Yeah. At the school and actually starting my second part of my life in education, I suppose.
MC: Oh. Yeah.
G: My second go at education.
MC: Yeah. Your second chance.
G: Yes.
MC: No. That’s good. Do you think it’s different now to when you first came into community ed. ‘Cause you’ve been in it for now, how many years do you reckon? About. It’s been a while.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

G: Three years, is it?

MC: At least, I'd say. I can look back on the records for you if you like.

G: It seems to have been a lot longer.

MC: It seems to have been a lot longer. (laughs)

G: Yeah. It does.

MC: I'll check your year if you like.

G: 2001. I would of - I would have probably.

MC: Yeah.

G: I would of thought. Actually my work gave me the first one day overview course at, um, um, Preston TAFE there, what's it, NMIT or whatever it is.

MC: Yeah. NMIT.

G: Yeah. That. Ah. And that wasn't enough. So that brought me here.

MC: Mm. Mm.

G: Yeah. I mean you can't learn anything in a day.

MC: No. Oh. No. I agree you've got to practice, haven't you?

G: It's ….

MC: OK. Yeah. And you think it'd still be much the same as when you first came in the door?

G: No. I think the place has improved or I look at it differently because I've lifted my game a bit. And I feel more part of the situation too, probably.


G: Probably makes it a bit more comfortable.

MC: Yeah. Oh. Yeah. That's good. Comfortable. Yeah. You've been to TAFE then. How would you describe a TAFE? If someone said to you, 'What's TAFE?' How would you describe it?

G: Um. I just went last week, actually. So -

MC: OK. So you should be an expert. (both laugh)

G: Ah. Oh. No. Interesting, enjoyable. Um. Because you know, you're there to - When you leave school, when you go back to education, you're going back for a different reason.

MC: Yeah.

G: And it's your own choice. So it's the choice you're more likely to put a bit more effort into, which you do.

MC: Yeah.
And - Um. The reasons are just you’ve got a justification for those, to do that extra mile.

Mm. So it’s your attitude more than the actual place you’re going, isn’t it?

Absolutely. Yeah.

Yeah. And that’s true. Yes.

And I think TAFEs are better now too. I think they -

Than they used to be?

Yeah. Yeah.

A bit more accessible, more learner friendly.

Yeah. No. That’s good. And what would you think is the difference between ACE and TAFE? You can be as negative or as positive as you like. I mean -

They’re both learning facilities and I think they both have their, their place.

Yup.

I don’t think. Um. One can be without the other. I think they’re both necessary.

Yes. They’re just different.

Yeah. Yeah.

Well, what is it you like about ACE? What don’t you like?

Um. Well, you move along at your own time, I think that’s good. Ah. You don’t get left behind.

Mm. Hm.

The environment’s OK. It’s - It’s accessible hours that can be suitable.

Mm. Hm. And you like that accessibility?

Yeah. Yeah.

OK. What don’t you like?

Ah. Here?


Nothing. Can’t think of anything.

Well, you can say anything.

No. I can’t think of anything.

OK. Do you see a need for it in the future?

For me or for everybody?
MC: Well, for you and for everybody.

G: Um. I think my need will be there as long as I have the - Ah. The will to drive myself further.

MC: Yeah. Yeah.

G: But for everybody else, I think. Yes. There’ll always be a need for education.

MC: Mm. Hm. Yeah. ‘Cause you might reach a point where you say, ‘OK. That’s enough of that. Now I just want to go to uni. or whatever’.

G: Yeah. Well, I may ….. to move on.

MC: Yes. ……. that’s what we want. OK. Have you got any ideas on what we could be doing to make ACE better? Ideas?

G: Oh. Give me ten minutes to flush out something. (both laugh)

MC: I just want spontaneously. (both laugh)

G: Uh. No. Probably.

MC: No. That’s fine. Apart from more money from the government maybe. (laughs)

G: Yeah. Well. That’s always ……..

MC: Yeah. (laughs) And you’ve actually studied computers? That’s right? In ACE. Anything else?


MC: That’s the RMIT one?

G: Yep.

MC: Yep. And with Georgia? Did you study with Georgia?

G: Workplace Training and Assessment. Which was part of my other studies. Occupational Health & Safety, which I don’t do here.

MC: Yeah. (laughs) And you’ve actually studied computers? That’s right? In ACE. Anything else?

G: Yeah. That’s in a TAFE?

MC: ……. or somewhere. OK. So you’re going to ACE and TAFE at the same time?

G: Oh. Yeah.

MC: ……. or somewhere. OK. So you’re going to ACE and TAFE at the same time?

G: Yes.

MC: That’s fine. Why did you choose ACE to do Workplace Training?

G: Cost.

MC: Cost. That’s the primary one. That’s the only reason?

G: The employer would not pay the fee at the other place.

MC: Yes. And you had a Health Card did you, at the time?
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

G: Employer paid for the training.

MC: Yeah.

G: Health Card pays for the other.

MC: Yeah. Yeah. I just wondered about the concession factor makes a difference, doesn’t it?

MC: Yeah. Yeah. I just wondered about the concession factor makes a difference, doesn’t it?

G: Even though it is -

MC: Oh. Related.

G: It’s related, but it’s separate. Um.

MC: That’s right. They were forced to make the decision.

MC: Yeah. Oh. That’s OK.

G: You’re screwed for everything.

MC: Yeah. It sounds like it.

G: They were against me. Yeah.

MC: So can you see changes that have happened in ACE since you’ve been involved?

G: You just asked me that question, didn’t you? (laughs)

MC: Yeah. I know. I’m just asking you in case you’ve been thinking about it. In case something slipped through, or you had another comment.

G: Yeah. Oh. Well, it’s got better for me. And I think it’s probably improved here it seems to me.

MC: Yeah. That’s fine. It’s not a trick question.

G: No.

MC: (laughs)

G: It is when it’s asked again. (laughs)

MC: ……………. It’s a trick question.

G: ……………

MC: Why do you think people, not yourself, but why do you think other people go to ACE centres? What do you think attracts them? Why do they come?
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

G: Well it’s always knowledge.

MC: Yeah. They’re searching for knowledge.

G: Yeah. There’s always self-improvement, self-development.


G: It’s part of the reason why I’m here too. This was my own personal development.

MC: Mm. Mm. No. That’s good. Um. And you’re also, um, a Committee member, aren’t you?

G: Yes.

MC: And you’ve been doing that for what, a couple of years?

G: Yes.

MC: OK. Why did you join the committee?

G: Ah. For more experience.

MC: Yes. And what activities would you have done on the committee, as part of the committee? Your role, your function, your whatever.

G: Oh. Um. General support, I suppose. Um. I’m sure I sort of, I try and fit in some sort of functional thing there.

MC: And meetings of course.

G: Of course.

MC: OK. Do you think part of that’s changed since you joined? Or is it still the same as a couple of years ago?

G: Um. I think - The committee? I think the committee’s improved. I think the - Ah. The format has changed a bit and it’s, it’s for the better. It’s a bit more organised.

MC: Yes. Yeah. Committees do that.

G: Mm.

MC: OK. Do you think part of that’s changed since you joined? Or is it still the same as a couple of years ago?

G: ‘Cause it’s had different people in and out, hasn’t it?

MC: Yeah. OK. Yeah. Why do you think people come to ACE as volunteers? See’ cause they do work apart from committee, which is a voluntary activity. But, you know, help out in classes and one-to-one conversation. You know, all those things.

G: Yeah. OK. Yeah. Why do you think people come to ACE as volunteers? See’ cause they do work apart from committee, which is a voluntary activity. But, you know, help out in classes and one-to-one conversation. You know, all those things.

MC: Yeah. No. That’s a good mix. Yeah. So they put in and they get out at the same time.

G: Yeah. I think so.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

MC: No. that’s good. Thank you.
I’ve got some questions there as you can see I’ve crossed them off. They were for staff, paid staff.

G: Right.

MC: OK. Do you see any difference in the computers; people, equipment or anything, since you started? Or would you say it’s still the same?

G: No. I’ve just noticed the programs up-dated. So - (both laugh)

MC: So you’ve got to do that all the time here, haven’t you? Yeah.

G: Yeah.

MC: Yeah.

G: And there has been a new lot of computers in here since I’ve been here.

MC: Yep. Yep. So it’s all that up-grading stuff?

G: It’s all progressing.

MC: Excellent. And you’re a - Um. Studying on-line, RMIT through Learn Links. It’s called Learn Links, that program. Um. You studies - What did you just say? Um.

G: There’s a Cert. II. Cert. II.

MC: Business Certificate II. Why did you get involved in it?

G: It’s an accessory that helps me with my other studies.

MC: Yep. Did you find it positive or negative?

G: Positive.

MC: That’s good. Why?

G: It compliments the other and gives me experience that I haven’t had before.

MC: Oh. Yeah. Do you think it should continue? Like as in ACE running RMIT programs, type programs.

G: Yes. Why not? It gives other people an advantage doesn’t it?

MC: Yeah. Oh. That’s true. Yeah. Oh. That’s good. Have you got anything else you’d like to say or ?

G: Thank you very much. (both laugh)

MC: Thank you for your ……

cont.

MC: Oh. Since we’ve made a couple of comments after we’ve turned the tape off, George. I’ve just turned it back on because you - Um. You commented that your first five years weren’t necessarily spent with your family.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

G: Oh. No. My mother was a dressmaker and she had to go to work then, and I spent a lot of my time with my grandmother.

MC: Right.

G: And - Um. Probably one of those values that were instilled in that time I was with her, and probably visits after have been - Ah. They’re the values that I’ve held through my life probably more.

MC: That set.

G: Yes.

MC: So how many years was that? Till you were -

G: Probably one to five or something like that. I don’t know. I can’t remember really. But it was pretty young. But then there was times I was back there.

MC: Yeah. And you went in and out?

G: Yeah.

MC: There’s that thing about, ‘Give me a child until he’s seven’, you know, ‘And I’ll show you the man’.

G: Oh. Yes. (laughs)

MC: You know that thing that the Jesuit said. So it’s interesting that formative period, isn’t it?

G: Mm. I can remember a lot of those times actually, probably more so than when I was with my mother really, I suppose.

MC: Yes.

G: There’s that thing about, ‘Give me a child until he’s seven’, you know, ‘And I’ll show you the man’.

MC: You know that thing that the Jesuit said. So it’s interesting that formative period, isn’t it?

G: Mm. I can remember a lot of those times actually, probably more so than when I was with my mother really, I suppose.

MC: Yes.

G: You know, some of those …..

MC: That’s interesting. Yeah. And you also mentioned marriage breakdown. Can you just tell me - Tell me again so I can get it on the tape?

G: What can I say? Wrong time, wrong place.

MC: Yes. So you had a personal marriage breakdown, as well as your parental one?

G: Yes.

MC: And that’s impacted on everything?

G: Well, it’s impacted in the degree that - Um. Um. I’ve got a dependent out of that marriage, I suppose. And - Uh.

MC: Mm.

G: Um. Yeah, It was a late marriage, but it was one that I should never have entered.

MC: Right. Oh. No. That’s interesting. Well, thank you again.

G: Pleasure again.
Interview with Gladys the 20th June

Now …, you know you can turn off the tape and refuse to answer any questions or ask me any questions as we go through. And you’ll get a copy and you’ll be able to mark out anything you’re not happy about or want changing at a later point. OK?

GLADYS: Fine.

IN: Can you tell me a bit about yourself, like where you were born and about your family?

GLADYS: Well, I was born in England. And I grew up on a housing estate in an industrial city; Birmingham.

IN: OK.

GLADYS: But you might not want to put that in.

IN: Well, when you say - I do. I want every detail. When you say housing estate, is that the equivalent, like we say housing estate maybe, for those new houses. Or do you mean public housing?

GLADYS: No. You’d call it Housing Commission.

IN: Oh, public housing. Yeah.

GLADYS: Yeah.

IN: OK. Yes.

GLADYS: And I grew up in a family of - There were seven kids, and I was the only girl in the family. So that had a bit of an impact on how I was treated and how I perceived myself.

IN: So, and what was your position?

GLADYS: I was the second eldest.

IN: OK.

GLADYS: So I had took on a role of second mother. And yet if I rebelled against that role it was really - I was considered ungrateful and whatever.

IN: Oh. So you were really defined by your gender in such a male dominated house.

GLADYS: Yes. And also - I’m very, very fond of my brothers. Very, very fond of them. But I think I can be fond of them because I’m such a long way away.

IN: Yes. You don’t have to support them and all that stuff.

GLADYS: Well Yes. Yes. And also that you - Like when I went home last year, we all were on our best behavior. And to try and all get on. But, you know, these cracks started to show up after a couple of weeks.

IN: Oh. Yes. So you mean you’ve moved apart, or just that there were always personality things like every sibling.

GLADYS: I just think it’s like any other family really.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: But we’re all scattered to the winds now. Across the world. And we don’t get together very often. So you can’t really test it out.

MJC
IN: Yes. A comparison with other siblings. When you say about the ‘housing estate’, can you tell me what it was like? Because, you know, in Australia, it’s probably not quite the same. Is it?

GLADYS: I tell you what, when I went to West Heidelberg, to the Adult Education place there, some years ago. Years and years ago. And it was just like going home.

IN: Oh. Was it?

GLADYS: Yep.

IN: Similar houses?

GLADYS: Crappy, crappy sub-standard houses. Not very well planned.

IN: They used to be the old Olympic Village. Wasn’t it?

GLADYS: Yeah. Yeah.

IN: That was built for a purpose. Sort of.

GLADYS: Well, these houses that I lived in, they were right on the outskirts of the city. Which was good, because it meant that you - We had fields and stuff to run about in. And now it’s not. They’ve built up further around it. But those days it was right on the outskirts of the city. And you sort of had the benefit of a bit of country life, but also some infrastructure within the city. And the houses - the estate itself, it was for poor people. It really was for poor people.

IN: Oh. Yeah.

GLADYS: But we didn’t think of ourselves particularly as poor. Because that was just - Everyone was the same.

IN: The same. Yeah. And, you know, it was so - In some ways like those things we see in movies. Was it? You know how you always see the English movies of working class life or - You know, the Coronation Street, you know, that sort of thing.

GLADYS: Oh. Well, Coronation Street was different. Because that was the old - We moved from the situation like Coronation Street which was the old working class houses in long terraces. Which were really, they were clustered around an industry usually. And that’s where we lived. But the new housing estates were built right on the outskirts.

IN: Oh. Yeah.

GLADYS: And there was no industry around.

IN: Attached. And what city was that?

GLADYS: Birmingham.

IN: Birmingham .... It sounds so different, doesn’t it?

GLADYS: Yeah. And I guess I grew up. We - My Dad worked in the factory. He worked at Cadbury’s and he worked at the car factory. And as a - Oh, he had to work so bloody hard it was not funny. And look, there was never a lot of money at home. And I think my parents tried to do the best for us. But it - in terms of education and stuff like that.

IN: Is that the next bit? Is it?

GLADYS: Yes. That’s the next bit.
GLADYS: But anyway - Yes. So things weren’t easy growing, really easy growing up.

IN: Yeah. And you’d say that that formed you as a person? You know, had a lot of influence on you.

GLADYS: Oh. I would reckon so. And particularly in England. Because in England there’s very much a very class conscious society. And people are fiercely proud of their class. Whereas over here people try and deny that they’re working class or whatever. Whereas over there - And even the way I speak is an indication of where I - of which class I belong to.

IN: It is a bit here too, you know. Because I’ve got a distinctly working class voice. And other people do pick up on that.

GLADYS: Yeah?

IN: Neville in the library used to always be able to say that he knew a man who could choose pretty much the suburb you came from around Melbourne. And he said to him ‘You’ve grown up around Dandenong’. And he said ‘Well, no. It was near Frankston’. But he said he was exactly in that band.

GLADYS: Yeah.

IN: Neville in the library used to always be able to say that he knew a man who could choose pretty much the suburb you came from around Melbourne. And he said to him ‘You’ve grown up around Dandenong’. And he said ‘Well, no. It was near Frankston’. But he said he was exactly in that band.

GLADYS: Yeah.

IN: Just from his accent.

GLADYS: Right. I mean, I can tell some differences. But others, it’s more in the way people speak rather than - Like I wouldn’t be able to pick it.

IN: To an area. Whereas we probably can. People can pick up on our nasal working class voice. As distinct from -

GLADYS: Oh. Right. Yes. That’s totally different.

IN: Yes. And so that’s what helped to make you the person you are now. You think?

GLADYS: Oh. Yes.

IN: And did you feel positive, you know, when you were growing up. Were you one of those kids who were sort of, you know, positive? Were you a miserable kid? Or were you normal run of the mill up and down?

GLADYS: I don’t know. I can’t remember being particularly positive or particularly negative, you know.

IN: Yes. Nothing comes to mind as a horrible or brilliant experience that jumps out.

GLADYS: I mean, I don’t know. Yeah. I was never really encouraged by my parents. You know, but I don’t know if that was any different from anyone else around.

IN: No. Not to aspire sort of.

GLADYS: No. That’s one of the things that I find really different here. Is that -
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

IN: Now, maybe. Not years ago though.

GLADYS: Yeah. And also when I go home now to see my brothers' family, my brother's kids they're all going to - they're talking about further study and bits and pieces.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: Whereas I am the only one in my family that had a tertiary education.

IN: Yeah. Well up to a certain point I am too. Yeah.

GLADYS: I'm the only one that. And I'm looking at my brothers, my cousins -

IN: Cousins, nieces and nephews.

GLADYS: My nieces and nephews and now my brothers kids. I've got one brother who was, you'd consider straight. And he went to work and he had a job. Whereas the rest of the family had been in and out of work. You know, they were musicians, they do bits and pieces. He's always been at the Post Office. He's our boring brother. But he's actually really gorgeous as well. But he is, and he's dependable. And he married. And he's the only one that's remained married. And his kids are, you know. And he's the only one that's bought his house, apart from me who's just done that. But that's because I'm here. I don't think I would have done it if I was in England. And so his kids are actually aspiring to something else.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: But they're the only ones in that whole family including all my cousins and everythi...

IN: That's interesting. And what about schooling? How would you describe your early years of school? You know, when you started.

GLADYS: I will tell you about my first day at school. Because it's funny I can remember that. I had to go to school in my nightie.

IN: Oh. Well, that's different.

GLADYS: I know. It was a nice nightie, but I knew it was a nightie.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: And it was because that was the best thing I had to wear.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: And I can remember that. I was very embarrassed about it.

IN: That's very touching. Did anyone else recognize it as a nightie? You don't know.

GLADYS: I don't think so. I don't think so. But I knew it was a nightie. And I think that probably covered -

IN: And that's obviously a strong memory because you've got tears in your eyes as you told me. So you know some of these memories are defining moments in your life.

GLADYS: But I think it shows how hard it was for my parents.

MJC
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

IN: Oh. Yes. Yes. And where did you go to school? I assume it was like a State School?

GLADYS: Yes. Oh well. Yes. Yes. Tom Thumb Primary School. Which was about a mile or two. Which was a long way, in the city.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: To walk to school. We all walked down to school. And I can remember our Johnny, that’s my oldest brother. He, he’s eighteen months older than me and he had - Our Mum used to take us to school. But after a while Johnny was supposed to take me to school. I started school at four and a half. And he used to hold my hand around the corner, and leave me.

IN: Oh. Right.

GLADYS: I used to make my own way.

IN: At four and a half.

GLADYS: Well, probably be five by then. Yes.

IN: He used to go off with his little mates or whatever, I assume.

GLADYS: Yes. Yes. And then, and coming home, he’d catch me up and walk home with me just around the corner.

IN: Did you do that to your other little brothers? No? You were the mother. Were you?

GLADYS: No. I was quite the opposite. Yeah.

IN: You were the Mum.

GLADYS: Yeah. Yeah. Cared for them very much. Used to hold their hand, you know, and watch them go in, and make sure they were all right.

IN: I did that with my little sister. And this - It was a State School. Can you remember anything about the type of learning? Or if you loved it or didn’t like it or -?

GLADYS: I’ve always - I always liked school.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: I always felt quite competent when I was at school. Never brilliant, but always very competent. And I was always in the top six.

IN: Yep.

GLADYS: Of the kids in my class. Roughly around about, you know, top six. And so - Yeah. That - I never had problems there, at school. The only problem I had was, I remember one teacher poking me with a pencil in the back. And I got so angry I just got up and went home. My Mum had to come down.

IN: That was very brave. They wouldn’t do it these days.

GLADYS: Oh no. That’s right. But basically it was my brother Johnny, he was very naughty at school. And so was my other brother Richard, the one that came after me. And the family got a bit of a name. And I was tarred with the same brush. And so it didn’t matter what I did, you know. She was always going to find fault with me. And when she poked me one too many times in the back with a pencil. I just went home and told...
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

IN: You didn’t do that in those days. No. You didn’t at all. Did you?

GLADYS: But she brought me back. She made me go back.

GLADYS: But she was good that she went with you.

IN: Didn’t just send you back alone. And you really liked - Did you like reading?

GLADYS: Oh. I loved reading. Loved reading.

IN: I find that interesting. Because a lot of people have said that they either couldn’t read and write or they loved the reading.

GLADYS: Oh. Do you know, one of the things I remember was writing? I used to write the probably awfully boring stories. Epics that went on and on, and on, and on, and on. I’d be - What? Six, seven years old. I’d be writing these epics and illustrating it. Yeah.

IN: Yes. What did you have to learn to read? You know, were they set readers or?

GLADYS: Yep. I remember Janet and John.

IN: Oh. Yeah.

GLADYS: And Jane and Peter. They were the readers. And they were all middle class kids and whatever. But we didn’t just - We didn’t think about it. We just thought that’s what, you know. It was another world.

IN: Yes. Yes. That’s true. So you’re positive about that. What about secondary school? I assume then it was a local school?

GLADYS: No. Really. I went to a grammar school.

IN: Right. And in terms of schooling, what would the grammar have been, you know, the equivalent of here? Or was it distinct from high school? You know, was it different? That’s what I mean.

GLADYS: I don’t know. You had to pass the Eleven Plus. You had to pass the Eleven Plus to go there.

IN: So it was screening?

GLADYS: Yeah. Yeah.

IN: And what did the kids who didn’t pass?

GLADYS: They went to a secondary school.

IN: Oh. Right. OK.

GLADYS: Which would be like high school. Would it be?

IN: A Tech. perhaps?

GLADYS: Yeah.
GLADYS: Yes. So - And I had to go off in a uniform. Oh, but I remember that. Oh God. I remember that. It’s the same as the nightie business. But it’s, only it’s years later. We had to wear a uniform and my Mum couldn’t afford to buy me a new one. So she bought me a second hand one. And everyone goes to school with a blazer that’s far too big for them. But you know you’re going to grow into it. And that’s fine, except that mine’s already looking a bit threadbare when I turned up in it. And it was still huge. And I still - I wore that blazer and it just got more and more threadbare as the years went on. So -

GLADYS: But at the same time, I was really glad we had a school uniform. Because there was no way I could compete with the other girls, in terms of, you know, wearing nice clothes or whatever. It was really good to have a uniform. 

GLADYS: Oh yeah. Always. In England you always had your best clothes you wear. And sometimes your school uniform. My school uniform was my best clothes. And my school shoes were my best shoes. And maybe the blazer was, even though it was threadbare, was also my best clothes.

GLADYS: But I remember even when I used to dress or could choose my own clothes and stuff. Like, you know, you’d go out or whatever. You’d always, always if you went shopping, went to town, you always put on your best clothes. You never went in your trackie dacks or - Not that we had trackie dacks in those days. But you’d dress, you’d make sure you were wearing - And, in fact, when I came to Australia and I was living in Newcastle, I used to dress up to go down to the shops. And you know how hot it could get. I arrived in January or December/January. It was so hot. But I still put all my good clothes on to go shopping.

IN: What year was that?

GLADYS: '81.

GLADYS: Yeah.

IN: OK. So, and when you were at secondary school, how did you go? Did you - ?

GLADYS: I did well. Yeah. I did well. I - It was very different though being there, because it was a very middle class school.

IN: Or your Dad?
GLADYS: Or my Dad. No. Well, my Dad would never have gone anyway.

IN: OK.

GLADYS: I mean he wouldn’t. He’d have hated it.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: To have gone. And used to try and - I never asked my parents for any money. I used to always try. And when I was working, I think I was working when I was fourteen, started work.

IN: So you left school then?

GLADYS: No. No. No. No. No. It was Thursday, Saturday and holidays stuff. And I’d always pay for school outings if I could myself, or not go. In fact, I often didn’t go to school outings because I wasn’t going to ask my Mum for the money. And I don’t know what school -

IN: Well. Yeah. You mightn’t have had a signed form. Did you need a signed form to be allowed to go or -?

GLADYS: Oh. Yeah. You had to do things like that.

IN: If you didn’t have a signed form, they wouldn’t let you go.

GLADYS: Yeah. I’d say my Mum wouldn’t let me go or something like that.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: And, of course, I lived such a long way from the school, in English terms, a long way from the school. It used to take me about an hour or so to get there on the bus. The teachers weren’t going to send you home. And there were no phones. So they’re not going to chase that up.

IN: Yes. Oh. That’s good.

GLADYS: Yes. Whereas other people had twenty pieces of work, you know.

IN: B’s and C’s.

GLADYS: But I just did the minimum. That’s what - I learnt that when I was at grammar school. But it was so hard to work because at home there was nowhere to do study or - You had to - and six brothers making -

IN: Bedroom.

GLADYS: Like. Yeah.
IN: Sit on your bed or something.

GLADYS: Yeah. Yeah. And then it was always cold. Because, you know, no heating. And so it - Yeah. It was pretty hard, really.

GLADYS: There isn’t an equivalent.

GLADYS: It’s about Year 10. 

IN: About Year 10.

GLADYS: It’d be Year 10. And you have to get O levels in order to go on to A levels.

IN: Oh. Right. So you get your O levels and then you go on to A. And so A would be HSC sort of thing?

GLADYS: Yeah. Or whatever you call it.

IN: Is it one year, A levels?

GLADYS: Two years.

IN: Oh. Yes. So it’s the same equivalent of VCE. Which is now two years. Oh. Yeah. Just wanting to get a bit of a picture in terms of ours. Because the other people I’m talking to, I think most of them - Well some were actually overseas as well but different places. And it’s really interesting to get a bit of comparison going.

IN: So in what year did you leave?

GLADYS: I left when I was seventeen. I’d just been turned seventeen. And I left school. I would have left school anyway, but I got thrown out of home.

GLADYS: So that was, that made sure that I left school. If you know what I mean. Yeah. Yeah.

GLADYS: That was a family breakdown sort of a relationship thing? Or just a -

GLADYS: Oh. Big arguments. Yeah.

IN: Oh. Yeah.

GLADYS: I didn’t do what my parents wanted me to do. Which was be a servant.

GLADYS: No.

IN: So that was about halfway through A levels or - ?

GLADYS: Oh. Just the beginning of A levels.

IN: OK. I’m just trying to get a bit of a picture.
GLADYS: You see, the other thing is, like, I had no role model to go on.

IN: No.

GLADYS: No-one. I had no encouragement from anyone. Not at all.

IN: Yes. Because most people left and went to work. About what?

GLADYS: Fifteen.

IN: Same as here.

GLADYS: And you know, there was, my parents hadn’t got any money. Yeah. And my brothers were really, you know, mucking about and getting into trouble. And they expected me to be some sort of saint, I guess. I don’t know.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: But and they - I think they needed the financial burden be relieved. I’m not too sure. I was just left. I left home.

IN: And what did you do then?

GLADYS: Went to live with my boyfriend. I had nowhere else to go. And he lived in another town. He was a uni. student.

IN: Oh. Yes.

GLADYS: And so I went to live with him.

IN: And got work? Or just stayed with him? Or what?

GLADYS: Oh. Yes. I did. Yeah. I was a - I worked as a trainee programmer. Which was so boring I left. It was so awful, you know. Yeah. It was hard. Those were very hard times.

IN: Yeah. So you just went to work for a while then decided you should have picked up on your education. Is that it?

GLADYS: No. No. No. No. I, while I was working as a trainee programmer, I met somebody who was teaching. And she suggested that I try teaching. So I applied to do, to be an assistant in a classroom. And I couldn’t start until I was eighteen. So on my eighteenth birthday or give or take a day, I think it was actually on my eighteenth birthday, I started off in a school. Expecting to be mixing the paints and stuff like that or whatever. And I turned up at the school, and the Headmaster, I remember him saying ‘Miss Carr. Mrs. Grocott’s had a nervous breakdown. Can you look after the class?’

IN: Yes. That was your teaching career?

GLADYS: And that was on my eighteenth birthday. And it was hell. It was hell.

IN: How old were the kids?

GLADYS: In fact I’ve got pictures of them I could show you. They’re nine, eight and nine year olds. Those were. And they were uncontrollable.

IN: And that was a working class school or -?

GLADYS: Oh. Yes. Oh. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. You wouldn’t get a middle class school letting an eighteen year old -
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

600 IN: No. That’s right. That they couldn’t find an emergency teacher. And you did that for how long?
601 GLADYS: A year.
602 IN: Ah. Yeah.
603 GLADYS: And then after a year I went to teacher training college.
604 IN: Oh. Yeah.
605 GLADYS: And I was nineteen.
606 IN: And you enjoyed that?
607 GLADYS: Teacher training college? Yeah. Oh. Yeah. It was a great time. It was a brilliant time. Like the beginning of the ’70’s.
608 IN: Oh. Yeah.
609 GLADYS: 1970. It was a great time. And the only reason I could go was that there was an opportunity, a window of opportunity for working class people. You didn’t have to pay for anything. Not only did you not have to pay, they paid you.
610 IN: Oh. Yeah. Yeah.
611 GLADYS: I had my fees paid. My accommodation paid. And I got some money as well. And if that hadn’t happened, I wouldn’t have.
612 IN: Wouldn’t have been able to. Yeah.
613 GLADYS: No. No way. No way. And - Yeah. And that was three years of training. And a very interesting point though, which it took me till I came to Australia to get over this. At the teacher training college, there was a very strong emphasis on middle class values.
614 IN: Yeah.
615 GLADYS: And I tried to suppress all my working class pride and background and whatever and those values. And to act in a way that was middle class stuff. And it wasn’t until I came to Australia that I could actually throw all that off.
616 IN: Yes. Background.
617 GLADYS: I’m just tracking your story here. Which is really good. So that was 70’s. I’m just tracking your story here. Which is really good. And was that the end of your education?
618 IN: So that’s really good. So that was 70’s. I’m just tracking your story here. Which is really good. And was that the end of your education?
619 IN: For a while. For years.
620 GLADYS: Yes it was. For a while. For years.
GLADYS: Now I have to tell you this. One thing I want you to hear because it’s very much a part.

I was at teacher training college I got really high marks. Because I did exactly the same as before. The minimum of work for the maximum of effort.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: Really good marks. And they wouldn’t put me in the degree stream because I hadn’t got A levels.

IN: Oh. Right. No RPL in those days.

GLADYS: No. And I got into teacher training college on the strength of my O levels. Which I had nine O levels. Which is above average.

IN: Oh. Yes.

GLADYS: And the - Except I had no confidence. I had no confidence really education-wise because it’s within that class thing.

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

GLADYS: You, you had no-one to encourage you or whatever. And, you know, no-one around me was going to teacher training college. All my school friends, none of them did that. They all went into secretarial stuff.

IN: Oh. Yes.

GLADYS: Or the government. Or something like that. So there was, there was really nothing to encourage me. And so when they told me I couldn’t go - I couldn’t do the degree course because I hadn’t got A levels. I just left it at that. And it was dreadfully unfair.

IN: Nowadays at least most people would know to sort of fight.

GLADYS: But there were people with A levels doing the degree course that their work was at a much - They were struggling to make their marks.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: But that’s how they - That’s the class system in England, you know.

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

GLADYS: Yeah.

IN: It’s just part of it.

GLADYS: So. Yeah. That was the end of my education and I went into teaching.

IN: Oh. Good.

GLADYS: Then after that -

IN: And then you decided to come to Australia?

GLADYS: Oh. Yeah. Eventually.

IN: After you’d been around other places in the world.

GLADYS: Yeah. I hitchhiked around with my friends for a few years. Got married and bits and pieces like that. And -
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IN: Divorced?

GLADYS: Eventually. Yeah.

IN: Actually family breakup is a really common thread I’m finding with people I’m talking to. There’s been a really - Yeah. I’m actually amazed the number of people who’ve either had a parental breakdown or their own. But perhaps everybody in society does now. I just know that there’s this huge concentration of people.

GLADYS: Yeah.

IN: That’s good. All right. Can we move on to ACE?

GLADYS: Yes.

IN: OK. Where and when, and how or something, did you find out about ACE? Given that ACE is Adult Community Education. Which a lot of people like me to explain straight off. So it’s different, I know, everywhere.

GLADYS: I can’t remember exactly. But I was working for the government and I wasn’t happy. I hated all that bureaucratic stuff and the distance or whatever from grass roots. Working with people and so on. And somehow I happened upon an ESL course. And I’m not sure how I happened upon it. But I can still tell you the building. It’s near the Market. And it was on the corner near the Market. And it was a migrant education thing of some sort.

IN: Oh. Yeah.

GLADYS: And I don’t know how I happened upon it. I can’t remember that. But I really thought ‘Do you know? I’d like to teach adults’. Because I’ve always loved teaching. And when I - Oh. When I came to Australia, I taught in Newcastle. When I came to Melbourne they wouldn’t recognize my qualifications.

IN: Oh. Right.

GLADYS: Because I didn’t have a degree.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: And I didn’t know how I happened upon it. I can’t remember that. But I really thought ‘Do you know? I’d like to teach adults’. Because I’ve always loved teaching. And when I - Oh. When I came to Australia, I taught in Newcastle. When I came to Melbourne they wouldn’t recognize my qualifications.

GLADYS: And I don’t know how I happened upon it. I can’t remember that. But I really thought ‘Do you know? I’d like to teach adults’. Because I’ve always loved teaching. And when I - Oh. When I came to Australia, I taught in Newcastle. When I came to Melbourne they wouldn’t recognize my qualifications.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: That I never did a degree and whatever. And a friend of mine really encouraged me to do it. So I - When I applied to Melbourne, they told me to ‘Get stuffed. Saying ‘You haven’t studied. We don’t take people like you’. And then when I approached Latrobe

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GLADYS: Really I wanted to do sort of a beginning study type thing. And Melbourne, they just told me to, you know, take a walk. Whereas Latrobe, they - When I went for my interview, they actually gave me, I did education, three years credit.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: So I did a degree in a year.

IN: That was good of them.

GLADYS: Yeah. They gave me three years credit for my teacher training. Which was quite remarkable. And - Yep. So. And during one of the courses I did there was Adult Education. As part of my Bachelor degree.

IN: Oh. Yeah.

GLADYS: And that introduced me. And then I went back and did - I did a research project on ‘Women in ESL’ stuff.

IN: Oh. Yeah.

GLADYS: And I really liked that. And I thought this is where I’d like to work. I sort of remember thinking it was going to the coal face. You know. I really liked that. And then I found an ad. in the paper, the local rag.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: For a job at Glenroy. With Bev Campbell.

IN: Oh. Yes. Yes.

GLADYS: And it was part-time, very part-time. At the same time I was working. I actually was working at Melbourne Uni. I was a women’s officer at Melbourne Uni. I wasn’t liking it sort of. It was just - The environment was not really what I’d thought it would be.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: And so when this job came up, I did both. I did the women’s - I got them to , I got them to - I job shared. I could job share. And that freed me up to go and work at Glenroy. And then when Bev left Glenroy I applied for her job. And got it.

IN: And got it. Yes. So how would you have described ACE when you first became involved?

GLADYS: Oh. Yeah. Well that’s interesting. It was very different from what it is now. It was essentially all volunteers. With co-ordinators paid a very small amount of money. And maybe one or two classes that worked with a paid qualified teacher.

IN: Same as here in this organization. Yeah.

GLADYS: I mean, I remember what it was like here to. And I remember the person who was here before.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: Before you. What was her name? Paul.

IN: And then it was Sue Naylor before that.

GLADYS: Oh. Right. Yeah.
IN: She was here. Because she was here with Chris Stewart/Stuart when I came and did some volunteer work here.

GLADYS: Oh.

IN: Remember Chris?

GLADYS: Yes.

IN: Would you have described it as the same or different to other types of schooling? I mean in the old days when you first started. Did you think of it as just being education? Or something different to other forms.

GLADYS: I don’t understand your question.

IN: Well, I just want - I just want to get a sense of, you know, how ACE is now, as distinct from TAFE and university. In those days, do you think it was more like the other sectors or less?

GLADYS: I honestly can’t say.

IN: That’s fine.

GLADYS: I can’t really say. I can’t tell you what my impressions of it. It was very much about almost rescuing people. There was very strong social, not social work, but community development aspects to the job. And there was - And there were a lot more literacy students then.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: I don’t know why that’s changed now. Maybe it’s that people didn’t fall between the gaps. Like the people I was dealing with. A lot of them had gone through the war. And so their gaps in their education were about - Were sometimes to do with about growing up in that period of time. But, and also to do with how they were treated.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: As kids and, you know, things like that. I think now, the system can pick kids up earlier. If they’re ill they get picked up earlier. There was a theme with going with people I was coming in contact with. All working class people. Mainly women, but not all. And a lot of them were from English speaking backgrounds. Whereas now, most of the people seem to be coming from non-English speaking backgrounds. But English speaking backgrounds and they’d been either abused as kids or been sick as kids. And there was no way that they ever caught up.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: There was no way anything that happened to them could be addressed. They were failed by the school system. That’s how I see it.

IN: Yes. And ACE was actually picking up on that in some way?

GLADYS: Yeah. And it was about - It was about treating the person as a person rather than somebody - Encouraging and trying to help them work out where did they want to go.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: So it wasn’t just enrol them in a course and -
IN: So it’s much more like a case study/case management thing, maybe. Where you looked at the whole person.

GLADYS: Possibly.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: Possibly. But it was very much with that sort of - Like an education thing.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: That was. And, of course, you - Like I can remember supporting people through child abuse. Things where they, you know, not their child abuse issues. But because obviously they taught you about that. But you had to, because you know, you had to know your limitations. And I wasn’t a counsellor. But you would help them find somebody and make sure that that was OK.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: And so on. But I also remember help - When one of them wanted to report their grandchild being in danger, they had to go through that process. And I had to support them through that.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: As somebody who was making a report. They were making the report, but, you know, I was supporting them.

IN: So this is the sort of support beyond the education.

GLADYS: Oh. Absolutely.

IN: Do you think it’s still happening now?

GLADYS: I don’t think it is. Not to the same level. Because I don’t think there’s time for it now.

IN: Yes. And what’s that time spent on do you think? Now?

GLADYS: I think there’s very much more a focus on the - I don’t know. You see, I’m not sure. I can’t really say. But I actually feel that people aren’t coming. I think there’s two things. That people with those issues may not be coming quite so much. And therefore you don’t have to address them. Or people are getting it addressed elsewhere. So when they come to an education facility, they don’t have to ask for that. So it’s hard to know which way that is.

GLADYS: So I think that it’s probably as much how things are being addressed outside. As much as how things are addressed by an education facility. But, and I think it’s more going to come up with people who have been failed by the education system. So if you’ve enrolled in an, like adult literacy thing, it was much more. It was - The learning was very much - Learning to read and write is inconsequential in a way. It was how the person started to feel about themselves, that was the important thing to tackle. And you did that in any way you could.

IN: So it was all about that self-esteem and -

GLADYS: Absolutely.

IN: Empowerment. And there’s a lot less of that now. Do you think?

GLADYS: No. I don’t know if there is. Because I’m not particularly involved at that level now.
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I was involved in the past. It certainly would if it’s needed. But the question is; is it needed? As much now.

GLADYS: I don’t know. I don’t know that. It was very much a feature of the work you did in those days.

IN: And so you don’t think you can sort of quantify that as better or worse now?

GLADYS: No.

IN: Given that you’re not seeing that. Yeah. OK. That’s fine.

GLADYS: I don’t get a sense when I’m talking to people. And people that I’ve met, you know, at Moreland Adult Ed. and whatever. That they - That that is - It doesn’t - I don’t hear the teachers talking about it as much as -

GLADYS: But then I’m not as involved as much now.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: So I’m not sure. It was very much a feature of what we were doing.

IN: Good. And how would you describe a TAFE to someone new to adult education? Just very quickly. When you think of a TAFE, what do you picture?

GLADYS: Big building. Big building. Usually an old school. I’m thinking of the Kangan TAFE at Moreland, you know.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: Big building. Big building. Usually an old school. I’m thinking of the Kangan TAFE at Moreland, you know.

GLADYS: There’s only a small section, the bit near that middle front. It had a bell tower on top. There wasn’t the second storey.

IN: Oh. Right.

GLADYS: Yes. So rather a large place. That would - That would have a lot more classes, a lot more students. And where decisions are made without a great deal of intimate knowledge of the people involved in the courses.

IN: Yes. That’s interesting. And do you think that’s different to ACE? Or do you think the same thing is happening in ACE?

GLADYS: I think it depends on the provider, quite frankly.

IN: Yes.
GLADYS: I would say with - I mean, one of the things about - I tell you, one of the big differences between, this is going back five years ago. But the big difference between them. We used to have students that came to us after they tried TAFE college. And TAFE college, they couldn’t cope at a TAFE college. They didn’t like the way that they were just left to find out things for themselves. And there was a huge assumption made by the TAFE college, that people could access various things. Where actually they had no skills.

GLADYS: They knew how to use the library, knew how to do this, that and the other. And one of the things was that they would just cancel classes if there weren’t enough people. They just cancelled classes. Or they would have a string of different teachers.

GLADYS: And a student who’s had difficulty learning, they cannot stand that. They feel they wanted support. They need continuity.

GLADYS: They need continuity.

GLADYS: No. They don’t want to have to - Like, they need time to trust somebody, you know. I mean, often with learning that’s very much a part of learning. Is you, in order to be brave enough to take the risks in learning, you need to trust the person, the teacher. And know that they’re not going to laugh at you. Because - I mean, a lot of people have gone through education having very bad experiences and whatever. So anyway - Yeah. With TAFE colleges used to get. There was one - The people used to come and say ‘Oh. Look. We’ve had three or four teachers in the term. And I don’t want that’.

GLADYS: Yes.

GLADYS: No. I can’t think of anything. I have the - I mean like - What I like about ACE is that there is a supportive element to it. Which I think is depending on the provider. There is greater - That’s - It picks up - It has the ability to support for people who’d probably fall out of the TAFE class system. Because it’s too either regimented or it’s - I don’t know whether they make it. I mean, I’ve just been through a TAFE course and there wasn’t a lot of flexibility, really.

GLADYS: The support was there if you asked for it.

GLADYS: Yes.

GLADYS: The support was there if you asked for it.

GLADYS: Yes.

GLADYS: No flexibility and support.

GLADYS: The support was there if you asked for it.

GLADYS: So you had to be confident enough to know.

GLADYS: Yes.

GLADYS: No. They don’t like about ACE? What would you like to see changed or - ?

GLADYS: Oh. I don’t know whether there’s another question. I think there’s something I don’t like about ACE. I think that it’s probably the same for all areas of education. I think that there’s some practitioners in there that shouldn’t be in there.

GLADYS: And I don’t think there’s a thorough enough grounding in pedagogy. For a lot of people working in ACE. I think people think that it’s an easy option. Whereas my belief is that people who have been failed by the education system need the absolute best. And it’s
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not a second rate thing. So I think in ACE you get people who go in there because they think it’s an easy option. And at the same time you get people who go in it because they really want to make a difference. So it depends on who you get.

GLADYS: I think one of the tensions I found was that is, because ACE has a voluntary background, that it’s very hard to shift people into what is professionalism without shifting into - Like professionalism, you have to document what you do. Whereas it’s very hard to get people to document or it has been hard to get people to document what they’re doing. At the same time you need to be able to do both. And I’m - you need to be able to deliver a very sort of student-centred curriculum. And, and have all the sort of touchy-feely sort of people skills.

GLADYS: And all that. And that community development aspect of adult education. And you also need to document it. And I think that the documentation has become onerous.

GLADYS: That’s one of the things I hate about ACE actually. It doesn’t provide a career structure for anybody. And the funding. But you see that’s not ACE. That’s the way it’s funded.

GLADYS: Yes. So that’s more a funding body, say ACFE in this case. Or OTTE.

GLADYS: Yes. Because when you said what did I like about ACE, I was just trying to think about actual tangible things about actually being in a -

GLADYS: I mean, it’s good about just being able to walk down the road and go there and so on. That’s, on the other hand I would - When I think about education for myself I probably wouldn’t go to, necessarily go to a Neighbourhood House or somewhere like that. Because I mean, I’ve done courses or whatever and always gone to - Well I’ve gone to -

GLADYS: TAFE or Uni. whenever I’ve wanted something. Yeah. Generally I’ve done that.

GLADYS: Yes. TAFE or Uni. whenever I’ve wanted something. Yeah. Generally I’ve done that.

IN: And that’s more though because you’re on a really higher level. Isn’t it?

GLADYS: Well I just think that if - Yeah. Yeah.

IN: So if you were sort of a girl who’d come out from England, having left at the end of your O levels, and come here. Do you think you would choose ACE as an option or -?

GLADYS: Don’t know.

IN: It is a bit hypothetical. Let it go. Let it go.

GLADYS: I don’t know. I don’t know.

IN: Do you see a need for ACE in the future?

GLADYS: Yes. More so. But I actually really - I’ve got this - ACE is - I don’t know what the next question. If there are more questions.

IN: There’s more questions. We can come back to that.

MJC
GLADYS: Well I wanted to say about ACE, which it has got nothing to do with ACE except that it’s to do with the bureaucrats. It’s that I feel that ACE has been hijacked by bureaucrats. And I often - And I don’t know if this is right, but having worked in government, not in the educational area, but worked in government with people that are careerists who’ve been in government for years and years and years. They need - For them ACE was very early for the sort of fuzzy-wuzzy and warm and cuddly, you know, whatever. Very hard to get tangent and make concrete -

IN: I know what you mean.

GLADYS: I’ve forgotten. To be tangible.

IN: Tangible. Yes.

GLADYS: And so, and bureaucrats couldn’t cope with this. And, of course, with more money coming in and the way the government and their bureaucrats have a need to say ‘Well, we give them all this money. How do we know it’s been well spent?’ Rather than listen to the ACE sector and try and build something from that. They’ve imposed something over the top. And which they understood and met their needs rather than what the students needs were. But they clothed it in language that sounded like student-centred.

IN: Oh. Yeah.

GLADYS: In actual fact it’s not student-centred.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: It’s sort of - It’s curriculum-centred. It’s sort of - And depending on the teacher it can be student-centred. But I just feel that with the imposition of you’ve got to do this, you’ve got to do that. That they, organizations have to apply for funding. You have to say ‘We’ll do this, we’ll do this, we will do this’. And then when you find that your students don’t want that, you’ve still got to meet what’s in your funding submission. So you imagine -

IN: And that’s got worse in a way.

GLADYS: And to me, that’s like bureaucrats have hijacked in more than one way, is that they dictate what you will provide now. You’ve got no flexibility or hardly any flexibility to change. You predict what you think you’re going to do, and then - And then if that doesn’t work out, you know, you sort of - ‘Oh. I’ve got to run this course’. Or you might lose your scope if you don’t do this or , you know.

It , to me what’s gone out of it is, the student doesn’t come in and you think ‘OK’. What - I used to have a class of students and they were - I said ‘OK. Now what do they want?’ We’d talk about it, we’d plan it. And then we designed something around that.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: And now the thing is that - The question there is, how do you then justify that to the funding body. The way you do it. But I could do that.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: A good teacher could do that.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: Because in fact you can just do anything if you put your mind to it. You know, you can twist or whatever. But that, that has gone now. I feel that now it’s much more unlike accredited learning. Because I think people need to get recognition for what they’ve
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got. And I am still not sure how much value anything under a Cert. IV has. I really don’t know.

IN: And yet now in ACE, we’re told by our region that the requirement for entry level, which is no higher than III.

GLADYS: I’m sorry. I don’t understand. Entry level?

IN: Whatever we offer. So it should be a Cert. I, a II and maybe a III. Which is terribly restrictive.

GLADYS: So they actually tell -

IN: They’re not funding anything at IV and above. In our region.

GLADYS: You know what, that’s part -

IN: They’re not funding anything at IV and above. In our region.

GLADYS: You know what, that’s part -

IN: That is so discriminating. When I think about it. Because the people come in and say have had a stroke or something. And they’re picking up a life again. They might even have a teaching ….. And they need to go back and do something. But they’ve got the capacity for higher, but they can’t sort of carry it out because it isn’t typical. We’re supposed to put them at entry level or send them to the TAFE.

GLADYS: Yeah. That doesn’t surprise me.

IN: So that actually just backs up what you were saying there about the way it’s being hijacked and that.

GLADYS: Yeah.

IN: We do actually write it up in terms of a case study if need be. We could justify it. If we wanted to have that flexibility. But, you know, it’s such a process that it just doesn’t happen to groups.

GLADYS: And it’s what bureaucrats understand. And I know that from being in a bureaucracy for the last five years. I know that, that the - They need to see things in their own way. Yeah. And you have to match their stuff.

IN: Yeah. Or else you’re - Yeah. Or that’s it.

GLADYS: And it’s what bureaucrats understand. And I know that from being in a bureaucracy for the last five years. I know that, that the - They need to see things in their own way. Yeah. And you have to match their stuff.

IN: You’ve been a student in ACE, just temporarily, haven’t you?

GLADYS: I think - Well when I managing Glenroy Adult Literacy, we got somebody in to - this was the in the days we needed to start with computers.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: And we got somebody in from Kangan TAFE. Except it wasn’t called Kangan then, it was Broadie TAFE. And to come and do some accredited computer teaching there.

And so in a way I was a student in my own education centre. And it was very interesting, the approach that the TAFE person took. It was terrible. It was very much a plod through the unit. And there was no - And it was boring and whatever. And there was none of this how I would have approached it. Where this is what you need to do ‘OK. We’ll do that’. And then the existing skills and then plot around that sort of. And - Yes. Anyway that was interesting. And also at Moreland Adult Ed., I did the Cert. IV by RPL. Which was -
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IN: Interesting.
Gladys: Interesting.
IN: But very thorough.
Gladys: But very thorough. I also - What else have I done here? I did, I did the volunteer training for the Commonwealth Games.
IN: Yes.
Gladys: Which that was - I actually did that in my own time really.
IN: Yes.
Gladys: I wasn’t attending classes.
IN: Well your skills were higher. Even though you’re unemployed and therefore fitted in the category.
Gladys: Yes. When I was at the TAFE college. Just in the computer course. Is that I was really getting frustrated because the way the material was presented. It suited a lot of people in the class. But it was - The stuff was presented, it was then pulled apart and gone over. And then you had another hour to apply it to your own stuff. Now that sounds all right but for me, you went over it in the beginning and I’d already applied it to my own stuff. And I was ready for the next thing. But we still had the two other processes that I personally didn’t need. So -
IN: Yes.
Gladys: I found that was - And in the end one day I just said to them. And there’s no - You couldn’t sort of move in and out. It was very much you had to be there. And so I went to the teacher and I just said “Look. You know, I really need to do this, this and this, because I feel I’ve done, I’ve covered that’. And so I had to negotiate that myself. Other people just didn’t turn up.
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IN: If you’re getting money it still is.
Gladys: And I find that’s horrible. Because, why should some student who happens to find themselves unemployed have to have their attendance reported on.
IN: Well, I just put out the book and I suppose they get them to sign it every few weeks. It’s not quite as rigid, I think, because they haven’t got the manpower to track it the way they used to by every hour. Now the person fills out ‘What have you been doing for the last fortnight?’ Attending classes at dah, dah, dah. And just sign it off.
GLADYS: Yes. I did that. I had to just put that.

IN: It’s not quite as bad as it was. Once we had to keep a detailed -

GLADYS: That’s right.

IN: Role. Hour by hour.

GLADYS: When I attended the course. There was an assumption that if you didn’t turn up like I think it was an 80% attendance expectation.

IN: Yes. We tried to have 75. So. Yeah. We’ve already covered that. And we’ve actually covered most of the questions in this section if you think about it. The difference between studying in ACE now and then. If you’ve gone to a TAFE or a university and their differences. And you’ve already mentioned the differences, haven’t you?

GLADYS: Yeah.

GLADYS: I’ll tell you a story about me at university. Because I, this was when I went to Latrobe, and I was so excited about going to university. And I was coming from a working class background, I got this idea that people were absolutely brilliant if you went to university. And it wouldn’t be - Yeah. And anyway I turned up on my first day, and I’m so excited, I can remember this, I was going ‘Whoo’ and jumping up and down, you know. Here I am at university. And I was in my first class which was Adult Education. And I always take copious notes because it’s part of my hearing - I have a hearing problem and writing the notes helps me screen out all the noises and so on.

So I’m taking copious notes and whatever. And being earnest, I’m incredibly earnest about what I do. And they gave us some - So we had this lesson with all the introductory. And then, at the end of three hours, they gave us the homework.

So I took this homework away and I thought ‘Crikey. That’s a lot of homework’. But anyway I started on the homework and it was lots of really quite analytical articles with all different aspects. And I tried to work out, ‘Gosh. There’s a lot’, you know. It was one of those questions where you had to ask for each one. And I guess these were guidance questions. So to get you to interpret the material. Anyway I worked on it day and night, day and night. And I only finished 75% of the work. And this was my first work, and I’m thinking ‘My God. I’m going to be behind. I’m already behind. And I’ve only been in my first week’.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: Anyway I’m thinking, I panicked and I thought ‘Crikey. Am I going to be able to keep up?’ So because I was an older student, I was thirty-eight when I went to uni. I went to the lecturers afterwards, after the second class, and I just said ‘Look. I need you to give me some pointers because you know, I’ve worked day and night on this, and I can’t work out how you prioritize what’s the most important text’. Because they were all really important. They all dealt with crucial parts, I saw with Adult Education. And they laughed at me. They laughed at me. And I had tears. I just said ‘I can’t do the work’. Anyway, when they saw the tears come in my eyes, they said - They then said “My dear, I remember them patronizing me. They said ‘My dear. That’s not a week’s work, that’s the semester’s work’. And I’d done 75% of the semester’s work in a week.

IN: Oh. I love it.

GLADYS: But such was my anxiety. (End tape 1, side 2)

IN: Now this section is about volunteers. I know you’ve been - You’ve done voluntary committee work. Not necessarily as a volunteer as in one-to-one. Which is what a lot of people do as volunteers.

GLADYS: No. No. I haven’t done that.
IN: But voluntary committee, I know you’ve done it a number of places. I’m not quite sure-

GLADYS: And in ACE only Moreland Adult Ed.

IN: OK.

GLADYS: I’ve been on a number of committees.

IN: Other committees. And so you’re a volunteer on other committees as well?


IN: OK. OK. And how long have you been doing it in ACE? What is it? About two years?

GLADYS: Yeah. Maybe two years?

IN: Why did you get involved? Or is that too long a story?

GLADYS: I didn’t really want to be.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: But a friend persuaded me.

IN: OK. What sort of activities would you say you’d done as a committee member?

GLADYS: Such as?

IN: Any. Like displays, meetings, promotions, personal development. I’m just trying to think. Any.

GLADYS: Well, I did some professional development training organized by ACFE. Involved management committee. Which was really basic, you know. But there’s always an element of stuff that you can pull out of it for yourself.

I’ve represented the organization at a couple of meetings, maybe.

IN: And how about documentation?

GLADYS: I’ve developed a risk management strategy for the organization. Not necessarily my role but as a member of committee. It was - It needed to be done and I was able to do it. The same with Occupational Health & Safety strategy. And I’ve also - Again it’s not my role on the management committee, but I did it as somebody who could do it.

Reviewed the policies and procedures and rewrote them so that they were - The procedures were clearer and sort of the policies were pulled together so that you only needed to look in one of the places for stuff, rather than trying to pick through the book.

I think that’s - What else have I done? You know, been to meetings.

IN: Good. Thank you. And why do you think people, other people, come to ACE as volunteers?

GLADYS: I don’t think there’s many people that - There aren’t enough people who - to volunteer. It’s a problem actually for community organizations. Every community organization that I know, with the exception of PRACE, is struggling to maintain a committee of management. And I think people in the old days you used to get people who just ‘OK, I can help in the local community’. And that was good enough. Now you need people from the local community who are participants in the organization and also can deal with governance issues. And they are - The governance is hard. There’s no difference between being a governor of a small organization and the governor of a big
organization. Your roles and responsibilities are still the same. And people aren’t aware of that. I don’t think. Although maybe aware but don’t want to think about it. And I believe that funding is going to be related to, if it’s not already, the quality of your management committee. That’s going to be a feature of competencies of organizations. And already ACFE is sort of indicating that stance.

IN: So it’s sort of ironic in a way that they keep talking about, the diversity of the committee. And how you’ve got to have this diversity. And your committee should represent that diversity. We got funded at Moreland to run ‘Training and getting diversity into your committee’. But in a way when you do that, they don’t have the skills to be able to.

GLADYS: Basically again it’s bureaucratic stuff.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: I mean, there’s nothing wrong with having a diverse committee. But it’s great, it’s really good. But, at the same time, the - I’m wondering whether, you know, maybe it’s looking at having a committee - I’m not happy with this idea. But having a committee that’s separate from your - A local advisory group. And so where you get input from people who - Like people in the local community have a lot to offer. No doubt about that. And an organization needs to tap into that. But I think perhaps we need to be a bit more creative about how we tap into it. How you get the information. How - And then people who really want to be part of governance - It’s going to be, it’s - Then they can join. But it’s so hard. And you might get somebody at Moreland - There was some comment last month saying that people were frustrated with the amount of paperwork you’ve got to rake through. Well there is, I mean that’s - The Lord knows and I know, and it’s probably always been there. But somehow people, all organizations are having to tighten up on OH&S risk management, on just on the documentation that, you know, they produce. Their financial accountability. Yeah. And that’s, it’s tied up, it’s in the AQTF standards. And I reckon that’s going to be spread out to other organizations. And you’re going to have to get accreditation on your governance, as much as your service delivery.

IN: In a way it’s funny, isn’t it? Because as you know they say overseas it’s going back the other way.

GLADYS: Well I can, I can. Yeah.

IN: The nine year cycle thing. Places like Canada, where they’re coming to grass roots again. You know, that stuff about ……

GLADYS: I can see that happening in ACE, in service delivery. Because the people are just going to say “Stuff this accreditation and this straight jacketing of learning. Let’s go back. And why can’t we design our own course?” And get that - Like if it’s on need, if it’s on need.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: Why can’t the government respond to the need?

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: Why has it got to be - And it’s because I believe - And I’m going off on a tangent here. I honestly believe there are careers tied up with this. There are people who’ve spent years and years putting together curriculum documents and competencies and whatever. And they have - And not to be wasted. They’ve got to tie everybody into it. And I think it’s that people are going to be almost walking away. Particularly if the funding gets tighter and tighter like it is. People are going to walk away from it. And say “OK. We will offer fee for service courses. And we’ll do what the hell we like”.

Comment [p992]: Change—more competent committees

Comment [IN993]: Bureaucratic stuff

Comment [IN994]: Local community

Comment [IN995]: governance

Comment [p996]: paperwork

Comment [IN997]: tighten OH & S

Comment [p998]: accountability

Comment [IN999]: AQTF

Comment [IN900]: accreditation

Comment [IN901]: careers tied up in accreditation

Comment [p902]: funding reducing
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IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: And. OK. And I think a lot of the groups will go to the wall.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: As well, because they’ll just say ‘It’s not worth it’.

IN: And their students can’t afford the fee for service.

GLADYS: No. No.. Well, that’s right.

IN: That’s the problem, isn’t it?

GLADYS: I can see maybe in more affluent areas that people will just say ‘Well, hold on. I’m here because I want to learn. I want to do something. I don’t want to want to get a certificate. I don’t want to have to do this, this and this. Why can’t we, you know. Let us design our own course?’

IN: Yes. Yes. Without all the documentation for getting it accredited or recognized. Yes.

GLADYS: And the other thing about all this accreditation and the hijacking by bureaucrats, is the language. The language has been, it’s been businessified. I’m not too sure commercialized or whatever. And so people - I’m jumping all over the place.

IN: No. That’s all right.

GLADYS: People are confused by the language. And I remember ten years ago, we were asked for our strategic plan. And I went into a spin. And I’m thinking we haven’t got one, we haven’t got one. And then, and now, and then later I found out it was we always had a three year or a five year plan.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: Now if they’d have asked for a three or a five year plan, I would have gone ‘Yeah. Here it is’. But they wanted a strategic plan.

IN: So it’s all that stuff about, you know, the power of language. You know, disempowering people because you don’t know the language or you look different or whatever.

GLADYS: I think that’s happened in ACE too, the disempowering. Like I’ve been out in ACE on a day-to-day thing as a practitioner and a manager within ACE. I’ve been out of that. And things have changed so much in those five years. Yet fundamentally things haven’t changed. The language has changed, the structures have changed. And I, with all my years of experience or whatever, felt disempowered by that. And that isn’t right.

IN: So when you say fundamentally things haven’t changed, what do you think hasn’t changed?

GLADYS: Well, the fundamentals of recording curriculum. Having, you know, your aims, your objectives, your outcomes. Like the way you’re going to deliver it. Your pedagogical underpinnings of all that. Those concepts are still the same.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: It’s been tied up in - Like, somebody asked me for a delivery plan. I haven’t got a clue what a delivery plan is. Well I hadn’t at the, you know. But if somebody had said to me, you know, sort of ‘Well give me a summary of the different courses’. And, you
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know, ‘Just a brief summary of each one that you’re doing over the year’. How long are they going to take. I could have done that. But you know there’s all this …? And the other thing too. There’s a confusion sometimes. A curriculum document now is something that’s been developed by a training board or something like that.

IN: Yes.
GLADYS: Whereas I think with a curriculum document it’s what teachers do.
IN: Yes. So it describes students, resources all that with the package. The curriculum package. Yeah.
GLADYS: Whereas a curriculum document now is?
IN: Is more like a training package or whatever.
GLADYS: But also its - And all the, you know, requirements that you - I find some of the requirements are actually quite onerous. And, for example, the stuff about information for students. And that students - And I’m finding -
IN: The booklet you mean? The student that …….. produced.
GLADYS: Like I’m - It’s the same for, I’m assisting an organization at the moment, to put together their student information booklet. And these are students who are not only - they are probably new arrivals, they don’t speak English. That’s why they’re coming to the course. And so we have to produce -
IN: Well, we argued that with the auditors. But they said we still needed it. Because, you know, we take new arrivals for the AMEP program here. And he said ‘No’. So how many pages is it?
GLADYS: Twelve.
IN: Twelve pages. And that is the minimum amount of material people are supposed to be supplied with in advance to enrolling. In advance.
GLADYS: But you see I actually think this is an antithesis to what we should be doing with education. Because you provide that to the student. They’re gone. They think ‘My God! If that’s what they’re giving me to start with’.
IN: No. That’s prior to enrolling.
GLADYS: Prior to enrolling.
IN: We were told that must be supplied to everyone who may be enrolled with the organization. Regardless of whether they can read and write and whether they speak English.
GLADYS: Well, I developed one for another organization who I’m doing some consultancy work for. And I have reduced it quite significantly. And - But it is still -
IN: I know. Yep.
GLADYS: Still eight pages. And these are the non-accredited courses. So therefore the amount of detail you need is slightly different. But that’s - The thing is, accredited courses and unaccredited courses, the needs of the students are the same. So I can’t see why you’re
treated differently. But people breathe a sigh of relief if it’s non-accredited because there’s less paperwork and less -

IN: Although they’re changing that because ACFE are now going to come out and audit any unaccredited course running this year.

GLADYS: So what are they going to be doing?

IN: Well, I don’t know. They just said that at a meeting I was at last week. ACFE are going to audit unaccredited. Yeah.

GLADYS: But to me it’s just - It’s bureaucratic nonsense. And I’m all in favour of people knowing. But deliver it in a way that doesn’t disempower them.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: If they want a printed thing, we’ll give it to them. But to insist that that’s -

IN: Posted to your home address when you’ve made an enquiry.

GLADYS: People don’t want it at their home address always.

IN: The cost of the postage and the ….

GLADYS: Yes. Yes.

IN: Anyway. There are some questions here about being on the staff. But I’m not quite sure - If you want to have a look at them and see if you think we’ve covered them. And why did you or do you work for ACE? Well, you’ve sort of answered that in that you’ve gone over your -

GLADYS: Yeah. I actually loved teaching. I loved it. And I actually felt it was one of the things I was really good at. But I left because I couldn’t – Managing an organization, big job, such a lot of pressure. That I, and I did it for ten years, and it was just getting ridiculous. And I think the crunch came was - And I’ll tell you this story now because it is about the sort of things we have to do within a community organization. And how there is no understanding at all by some bureaucrats. And basically we got flooded out. And all our documents and so on.

IN: I want this in. I want this in. Sorry about that.

GLADYS: Gosh. It’s me getting all hot under the collar. No. But these are the things that make me really angry.

We got flooded out. We were in a rented building. A sub-standard building. We had not a lot of money. So therefore that was all we could afford. And we were, you know, sort of - The people who owned the building had told us that they’d fixed the roof where the water was coming in, whatever. It hadn’t been fixed so - And then we had another flood. It was flooded again.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: Now, that week that we had the flood was also when we had to have our very first ACFE audit. I’m talking about - Would it have been seven years ago?

IN: Yes.
GLADYS: Where they decided they were going to -

IN: Re-registration.

GLADYS: Yes. The re-registration or whatever. I rang the regional manager who was coming out to do the audit. And I couldn’t understand why the regional manager wanted to audit us. But, anyway, she did. And I said could we - We’d just been flooded out. All our files are soaking wet. We had the carpets, apart from being an OH&S issue, we shouldn’t have been in the building anyway with all the mouldy stuff going around. I said could we postpone the audit. I wasn’t saying can we not do it. I just said -

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: And she refused. And she - And so as well as being, having everything, you know, all over the place trying to - Staff were upset because they’re not going to get paid because we couldn’t deliver courses. Trying to work out different ways that solved everything. And on top of that, this person, this bureaucrat, was so out of touch with what it’s like to be in a community sector, insisted on carrying out that audit. And I believe that she wanted to find mistakes that we were doing and thought, you know, whatever.

IN: So that was the straw.

GLADYS: That was the straw that broke the camel’s back. It just pushed me one - Like, the demands were getting higher and higher and harder and harder to meet. On - Given that you’ve got no support. You’ve got to do everything yourself and whatever.

IN: Yeah. That was it. And I just thought ‘If that is how I am’ -. There was no respect from that woman, that regional manager. There was no respect from that person towards me.

GLADYS: And it was almost as if she was out to get us. And I don’t understand why. I’ve no idea why that - But that’s how it seemed. I couldn’t, I couldn’t find a reason for it even, you know. And I just thought ‘If that is the lack of respect and lack of understanding, Well, I can’t put up with it anymore. I’m going to get out. I need a break’.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: And then I took my long service leave. And I decided not to go back.
GLADYS: Well, I think that probably they’re not good things. Like under funding in the area. The way that you’re considered, you know - The thing that has not changed is the sessional teaching. I think that’s appalling. But the, but you actually - I tell you what, this is, again this is a bit all over the place. What I’m saying. But ACE organizations, and other community organizations are no different, they have the constraints and demands that the business section have.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: But they don’t - But they also have the accountability to government. So businesses can do strategic planning and make decisions, they haven’t got to justify it. They don’t have somebody else coming in to check up on things. They only have to make sure they’re compliant with OH&S, and awards and stuff.

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

GLADYS: But they - The decisions they make are their own decisions. And whereas we have to make those decisions too. But then we have to report, like reams and reams of reporting and so on. So the workload for a small organization that’s government funded is double that of a business. You know, the - You think and the not-for-profit sector, you know, you don’t - There’s this assumption that you don’t have to. You just muffle it, you know. Not muffle. What’s the word? You just sort of -

IN: Yeah. I know. Fudge your way. Fudge.

GLADYS: Fudge it. Yeah. Yeah. You know, near enough is good enough. But that’s not the case anymore. It’s not like that.

IN: No. And you’d know because you have worked in other government, semi-government organizations.

GLADYS: My last job was very much, was implementing government programs. I had to go round the State to different community organizations. And the difference! If they got me, how different their treatment was when they got me to another bureaucrat. Because I went with another bureaucrat once. And it was quite remarkable that there was, you know. ‘Well, why can’t they do this’?

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: And there was no understanding at all that this person is working two days a week. And two full days spread across the week.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: And they’re supposed to do all these things.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: And I just felt there was a total - Like, it total lack of understanding by some of the people in the government that I was working along side. And they, they didn’t have a lot of success actually with people. With the organizations. But. Yes.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

So going back to where we were at with the things that - Fundamentals haven’t changed in that you’re working on the smell of an oily rag.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: You’ve got to - You’re dealing with the issues of staff. And you’ve got to support staff. Staff - I would say that just trying to get the best out of your staff. Trying to keep some continuity for students and for the organization by retaining staff. All those things.

IN: And behind that you’re sort of plugging the floods. And whatever else happens to be happening in venues that aren’t your own.

GLADYS: That’s right. Yeah.

IN: Because people just don’t have, usually don’t own a venue. Yeah.

GLADYS: That’s right. Yes. So I think a lot of things are still the same. I think the language of reporting has probably changed. And also the way everything is tied in with these training manuals and things like that. Which I quite like the idea of having some stuff there for reference.

IN: For framework.

GLADYS: Yeah. Not the way - I mean, poor teachers can just - When I say poor, I don’t mean financially poor.

IN: And there’s the upgrade every three years we have for staff again.

GLADYS: It’s hard. It’s really -

IN: Well, can I ask you just a couple of questions now? I know, because you were doing the job some years ago, you’d be able to remember what IT was available when you started in ACE.

GLADYS: Oh. There was none.

IN: None. We had some money. And we, we had some money that we needed to spend. And so we bought computers.

GLADYS: And there were very, very few organizations that got computers in those days. And we were one of the first. And, and I can remember the very first computer we had. It wasn’t Windows. This was before Windows.

IN: Yes. With one of those blue DOS screens.

GLADYS: Yes. Yes. So, and trying - And I remember when we got the computers, trying to get students to use them. And I used to bribe them. Because we took on a - We got some money to - Because we had the computers we then, it was amazing, we got more money.
IN: Oh. Yes. Yes.

GLADYS: Because we did various government - We got money from the region and whatever. To trial different things. And, and the students I used to have to bribe them. I’d say, ‘Look. Please let’s do half an hour on the computers’. These were mainly over 60’s, over 55’s women from non-English speaking backgrounds. And all they wanted to do was talk about their pasta recipes and things, you know. Which was great for me but - And I tried to get them to use the computers. And then some of them did. And the students with intellectual disabilities loved them.

IN: Loved them. Yes.

GLADYS: Fantastic for them. And we’re talking about really basic programs, you know. Not the interface that we’ve got now. And everything was slow. And we had these interactions between, we had PRACE, I think it was.

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

GLADYS: Not PRACE. Olympic. Olympic. They had some students. We brought the students together and they met and they used to correspond within the Internet. And it was so slow. It was unbelievably bad. But - Yeah.

IN: But it happened.

GLADYS: Yeah. Yeah.

IN: And all the financial stuff. The statistics and those things?

GLADYS: Oh. Yeah. Everything. Everything was hand written.

IN: Yeah. How would you describe it now? The IT situation.

GLADYS: Well, you have to be in it. If you’re not - And I think this is one of the things that governments haven’t understood in terms of funding. Is that community organizations, if they are going to teach, and you can’t teach anything now without IT, I don’t think.

IN: And so governments, when they give you the IT money for the year.

GLADYS: Yeah. No. There is government money for computers, but I - Because of when I was, what I did, I lobbied hard for it when I was in there. But I think it’s only for people that are offering public Internet access.

IN: Yes. I see a lot of that. And you’ve got to have a space that you can just leave open to people, without a support worker in there. That’s what it means, doesn’t it? And in the buildings, unless you own the building.
GLADYS: But that money, you can use that money to pay for the worker. But again you’ve got to look at what’s the need for the organization.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: And for some that’s what they need, you know. They - We all need to pay somebody. And that’s a community need.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: But in a place like this. There’s other places that -

IN: But people need the language support sometimes as well.


IN: OK.

GLADYS: So anyway with the IT too, it was - It was really hard to get good advice back then.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: And people, we couldn’t afford to pay professionals. And so we had to set up real hotchpotch sort of set-ups and whatever. And it, and then some IT chap would come in. And it was a chap in those days. He’d come in and set up the idiosyncratic stuff. So when they disappeared -

IN: Nobody knew how to use it.

GLADYS: Yes. Yeah. It was really awful. And it was very expensive, the ISDN line that we got.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: A dial-up. It was a dial-up line. And you just couldn’t run a whole heap of computers off. And so when we got the ISDN line, that cost such a lot of money. $2000.

IN: They still do. We have to have it in two buildings here.

GLADYS: So things have -

IN: Changed.

GLADYS: Things have changed IT-wise. Yeah.

IN: That’s good. Have you got anything else you would like to say about ACE? Anything at all. Or make any personal comments.

GLADYS: I feel ----- (end side 1 tape 2) has gone out of ACE.

IN: Why?

GLADYS: And I may be wrong there because - And it may be because I’m not involved. But I feel that, like I said, it’s been hijacked by bureaucrats. And I’m not sure whether the bureaucrats are their own agents or whether they’re latching on someone behind that.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: But I feel that the decisions - It’s a top down thing.

IN: Yeah.
GLADYS: Rather than a bottom up. And I think that’s the big change in ACE. It was - Although in the old days it was all very patronizing middle class women, providing volunteer assistance to the poor working class people. And I didn’t like that dynamic at all.

IN: No.

GLADYS: And I thought the - It was very, you know, the reasons for people’s involvement was never, was never clear. And so -

IN: It was much more that charitable -

GLADYS: It was. Yeah. And that’s one of the major changes.

IN: Yeah.

GLADYS: That’s one of the major changes. But I don’t think we have to have gone right down the path where we’ve gone at the moment. It seems to be we need another way other than the bureaucratic response that we have now. We need another way of justifying and being accountable and being responsible and being responsive. We need another way. The way we’re going now, is there’s so much paperwork.

IN: Yes.

GLADYS: And I think that’s because bureaucrats don’t understand.

IN: Yeah. That’s good. Well, thank you very much for that.

GLADYS: Right.
Interview with Ilispeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

IN: Interview with S. Um. The tape’s working.

Um. You know you can stop the interview at any time. You just press that to turn it off, or just give me a wave and we’ll turn it off. And, um, I’ll have this typed up when we finish and get you a copy. And if you decide you don’t want to, um, say anything, or you’re sorry, or whatever, just take it out and you’ll never be interviewed, um, identified. OK?

S: Terrific.

IN: Happy about that?

S: Yes. Fine.

IN: OK. Can you tell me a bit about yourself? Maybe where you were born, or about your family.

S: Um. I was born in Suva, Fiji, to a Fiji islander father and a British-Canadian mother. Second of the First, 1979. In the maternal unit, Suva, Fiji. And I was the first child and the only child of both parents. To the best of my knowledge.

Um. My parents had a lot of difficulty in their marriage. Their cultural differences, back when I was born, were pretty huge. And, um, my mother’s family, my grandmother, was horrified that her daughter was marrying a black man. Um. It was very clear. She sent my mother a message saying, ‘I don’t want any black grandchildren. Thank you’. Um. I know people in my father’s village were also wary of my mother. Thought that he should have married a village girl.

And so all these things just fed into one another, and it sort of ensured that the marriage couldn’t work long term.

And, um, Mum always said that Dad had a drinking problem, and was violent and would, you know, come at her with a machete, sugar-cane machete. And, um, go on benders for days and days and leave her just with me, a very small baby.

Um. So it was all that supposedly happening. Mum took me back to Australia in 1980. And then she came back for a couple of weeks to Fiji, um, to try and work things out with Dad. That didn’t happen. And so about a month later she, um, she said to Dad, ‘Look. I’m going back to Australia and I’m taking S…’. And, ah, Dad drove us to the airport, I think it was Nardi Airport. And, ah, I don’t remember this, consciously anyway. And, um, all the way, right through the airport, I was just walking and I was holding Dad’s hand. And I apparently, I sort of knew something was not right. And, ah, anyway we got onto the tarmac and that was apparently when I realized what was happening. And I just, just grabbed Dad, I wouldn’t let go of him. And I was crying.

And I was screaming. And, ah, Dad was crying, and Mum had boarded the aircraft. And, um, Dad had to pick me up and go up the steps of the aircraft and physically give me to Mum. Because I was so upset. Just absolutely distraught. And Dad was extremely upset. And, ah, that was 19-, it was 1980, 1981. Ah, I never saw my father again until June of this year, 2005.

IN: And that was exciting?

S: Yeah. Oh. Yes. (both laugh) Yeah. No. That was, that was amazing. Um.

IN: Mmm.

S: After all these years to get a phone call out of the blue.

IN: Yes.

S: You know, like that it was just - Yeah.

IN: And it would have been a totally different life, wouldn’t it? If you’d stayed in Fiji.

S: If I’d stayed. Yes.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

61 IN: Yeah.

63 S: It would have been completely different. Um. All my cousins, they’ve lived happy, healthy lives in the village.

69 IN: Mmm.

73 S: And, ah, Mum, as I was growing up at times, she regretted. I think she regretted what she’d done. I remember her saying, “We should have stayed in the village”.

80 IN: Mmm.

86 S: You should have stayed in the village with your cousins.

93 IN: Yes.

100 S: And your family.

108 IN: The extended family. Yes.

115 S: Yeah. The extended family. And, ah. Yeah. And then my cousin, Anisa, is an accountant. Um. Her brother (name), another cousin, (name) is an economist. Became the first Fijians to enter Sandhurst Military College, and they’re both in England. And, um. Yeah. It’s amazing. I would have probably had a better life, had I grown up in the village.

122 IN: Yeah.

129 S: Yeah.

136 IN: Yeah.

143 S: I mean, it’s still a very traditional life. There’s no phone lines.

150 IN: Yes.

157 S: Um. Yeah. My, a couple of my uncles and auntsies farm the land with their children. So. Yeah. There’s no Foxtel. There’s no iPods and no mobile phones. You know, there’s no McDonalds. There’s none of that. Um. It’s a very close knit family. Very religious.

173 IN: Mmm.

180 S: Community.

187 IN: And it was a very indigenous community, wasn’t it?

194 IN: Yes.

200 S: No.

207 IN: Yeah. Yeah.

214 S: It was the village of Wallada. Wallada. It’s about three hours out of Suva.

221 IN: Right.

228 S: And they’ve now built a road from Suva going to there. But when my Mum married my Dad, back twenty-five odd years ago, you could only get there by boat.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

IN: Oh. Right.

S: So it was quite -

IN: Very isolated.

S: Yeah. It was quite - Yeah. Remote from, from the capital. So it’s good. It’s retained a lot of that to this day, from what I understand. So. Yeah. No. To finally find that bit if my family, Dad’s side, it’s been great ’cause after all these years of wondering.

IN: Yeah. Where he was.

S: Where he was.

IN: And everything.

S: Yeah.

IN: And there’s a whole big family, isn’t there?

S: (laughs) My Dad was one of eight children. And I have twenty-one first cousins.

IN: Wow.

S: That’s - On my Mum’s side, I have one cousin. And two aunts. And that’s it.

IN: Yes. And that’s it. Yeah.

S: Instant family, just add islanders.

IN: And do you think you’ll meet them?

S: Yes. Yes. And my Uncle Kooli has sent me two letters in the past week, with family photos. And, um, I guess - Some of it’s a bit daunting.

IN: Mmm.

S: But there’s just - Um. There’s something that’s a bit daunting. I’m just trying to find the actual words in the letter here. It’s a bit, um, daunting. Like Dad said here. Basically it’s this. The family has a lot of expectations, um, for me. I’m just trying to find this bit.

IN: You mean of success and careers.

S: Success. And career. To finish my, um, university.

IN: Yeah.

S: Degree. Um. Here, here it is. ‘The family have very high expectation of you. Because you have a white mother’.

IN: Mmm.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

S: So Dad said that to me.

IN: Mmm.

S: Over the years Mum also intimated that, that -

IN: Mmm.

S: And I’m the only one out of - With white blood.

IN: But you’re not going to let that put pressure on you, are you?

S: No. I’m trying not. But it’s kind of - It is daunting because that’s been mentioned by both Dad and Uncle Kooli.

IN: Mmm.

S: And obviously, you know. And, ah. Yeah. No. It’s, that could be hard.

IN: Yes.

S: But I will deal with that.

IN: Yes.

S: You know. And, um, I also found out, on the weekend, that I was actually the favourite. Out of all the grandchildren, out of Dad’s Mum and Dad, when I was a baby. So out of twenty-one grandchildren.

IN: Yes.

S: I was the favourite. And, ah, Dad also said that, that over the years probably hastened my grandmother’s death.

IN: Mmm. That being alienated from a grandchild.

S: And, ah, Dad also said that, that over the years probably hastened my grandmother’s death.

IN: Yeah.

S: Yeah. And, um, when my grandmother died in 2002, and Dad said that everytime that they talked, my grandmother would cry and ask, ‘Where’s Ilisapeci? Are you going to find Ilisapeci? Where is she? What’s happened to her?’

IN: Yeah.

S: And, ah, Dad also said that, that over the years probably hastened my grandmother’s death.

IN: Yeah.

S: Yeah.

IN: Because it wouldn’t have been able to have happened before, would it? Because they were so isolated.

S: Exactly.

IN: It would be a loss.

S: Yeah.

IN: Yeah.

S: With all the generations in the village.

IN: Mmm.

S: You know, stayed in the village. You know? Some would go to Suva. But, you know, that family is such an important thing.
IN: Oh. Yeah.

S: That tribal connection is so important. And, Yeah. This was the first.

IN: Yes.

S: And, um, I guess the thing with the bit, with the white mother, sort of like. A white mother brought white problems.

IN: Yes. Yes. Exactly. Yes.

S: You know?

IN: And the re-location to where? Sydney, wasn’t it?

S: Yeah. That’s right. I grew up in Sydney.

IN: Yeah.

S: And it’s just amazing. I think if I could have stayed in the village, I would already have a Degree of some sort.

IN: Some of the others have?

S: Yeah. ‘Cause they have. I’d be happy, healthy.

IN: Yeah.

S: And it’s just amazing. I think if I could have stayed in the village, I would already have a Degree of some sort.

IN: Some of the others have?

S: Yeah. ‘Cause they have. I’d be happy, healthy.

IN: Yeah.

S: But, um, by virtue of what my mother did, I’ve had to struggle. Um. And - Yes. Be on the streets peddling narcotics, for eleven odd years now. Um. The whole deal.

IN: Yes. I remember you said that. That, you know, you’d had quite a torrid life really. Hadn’t you?

S: Yeah. (laughs)

IN: So when you were in Sydney, that was part of your life there, wasn’t it?

S: Yes.

IN: Yeah.

S: I mean, it was - My Mum took me away from Dad. We moved to Sydney, to Manly. Um. Which is the area I grew up in. In Manly or Balgowlah, like those suburbs surrounding Manly. Um. Beautiful area to grow up in. Um. But an only child with a single mother who at times - She didn’t really want me. But on the other hand, there was no way she was going to let my father’s family have me either.

IN: Yeah.

S: And, um, Yeah. No. I think my Mum needs psychological help. Definitely. My Mum is paranoid. She was absolutely paranoid all through me growing up. That Dad would come and snatch me away.

IN: Mmm.

S: That he would come. And so I couldn’t - We never had a listed phone number. I could never tell any of my school friends my phone number or where I lived. Um. It was just bizarre.
IN: Mmm.

S: Just bizarre. And I think it was a bit hypocritical, because that’s what my Mum did to my Dad. She snatched me away from my Dad.

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

S: And then she - In Sydney, you know, being a hypocrite. ‘Oh. I’m so afraid your father’s going to come and get you’. That’s what you did to him and his family.

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

S: You effectively snatched me. Took me to a nother country. And then cut off all contact.

IN: Yeah. Yeah. Oh. No. It’s a tragedy for a child. Isn’t it? Yeah.

S: So. Yeah. And so my Mum divorced my Dad from Sydney in 1984. And. Yeah. I spoke to my Dad when I was about six, on the phone. And that was it. And my Dad stayed in contact with my Mum’s elder sister, Auntie Susan, who also lived in Sydney. And when Mum found that out, she went berserk. She had a huge fight with my Auntie Susan. Cut her out of her life. And that’s remained that way to this day. They’ve only spoken once in eighteen years.

IN: Oh dear.

S: Over that.

IN: Yes.

S: And, um. Yeah. No. Mum just cut all traces of everybody out of her life. If she didn’t like you, you were gone. You were permanently gone. Cut out.

IN: And she never remarried? Or -

S: No. Didn’t remarry. Mum, she never went on dates, she never remarried. Um. She devoted her whole life to me. But - I paid for that.

IN: Yes. Yes.

S: And she made sure that I knew. You know. She’d deliberately do things the hard way.

IN: Yes.

S: And then she would bitch and moan about it. Like washing all the clothes by hand in the kitchen sink. When she could have just used the washing machine.

IN: Yeah.

S: And the, you know, the communal washing machine.

IN: Yeah.

S: She’d stand at the sink scrubbing and scrubbing and scrubbing clothes by hand. Like you’d do at the turn of the century. And then she’d bitch and moan and complain the whole time, how nobody helped her.

IN: Mmm.

S: And this and that. Even simple things like, I’d ask all the time could I wash the dishes. ‘Can I help you dry the dishes’. ‘No. You’re too incompetent. No. You’re too stupid’.
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360 And then, of course, while she’d do it all by herself. ‘Oh. You never help me. You’re a lazy bitch. You don’t do anything’.

361

362 IN: Mmm. Yeah. You couldn’t win.

363 S: I couldn’t win. I couldn’t win. And so it was a living nightmare. Um. And my Mum was very, very abusive, physically abusive. Um. From a very young age. I remember when we lived at East Esplanade, I would have been not even four years old. And my Mum threw a frying pan at my head that narrowly missed.

365 IN: Mmm.

366 S: And smashed into the fireplace. And, ah, the abuse just got worse and worse and worse. Um. And Mum was pretty cunning. She was pretty smart. She learned where to hit me so it wouldn’t show.

368 IN: Mmm.

369 S: And smashed into the fireplace. And, ah, the abuse just got worse and worse and worse. Um. And Mum was pretty cunning. She was pretty smart. She learned where to hit me so it wouldn’t show.

370 IN: Mmm.

371 S: So nothing would show. It would be covered by school uniform.

372

373 IN: Yes. Yes.

374 S: And, you know, she did go really berko at times and I had scratches down my face and all that.

376 IN: Mmm.

377 S: I used to tell people that the neighbourhood cat did it.

378 IN: Right.

379 S: The cat did it. Yeah. There wasn’t a cat that lived within ten blocks of us. But the cat did it.

381 IN: Mmm. Mmm.

382 S: You know? Or I walked into a door.

384 IN: Mmm.

385 S: And I must have been the clumsiest kid in the Shire.

387 IN: Bet you haven’t got a cat now.

388 S: That’s right. (laughs) No.

389 IN: How old were you when you left home? Because I know you -

391 S: Fifteen.

393 IN: And you just stopped school?

395 S: Yeah. I mean I - My Mum put me through several private schools and whatnot. But Mum also had problems with those schools, and she’d pull me out.

398 IN: Mmm.
So, I mean, by the time I left home, we’d moved at least eleven times.

Oh. Yeah.

In twelve odd years.

Gosh!

Um. Mum would never unpack anything. We’d be living in a place, and the majority of the stuff would be packed up in boxes a year later. Crazy.

And then I went to several different high schools. Um. My Mum pulled me out of Manly Selective High. She wasn’t happy. Put me into Montesangelo College Catholic Girls school. I got expelled from there three quarters of the way through Year 9. For, um, punching another girl in the face. Uh. My Mum then kept me hostage till the next school year started. Took my keys away from me. Unplugged the phone and put it in her handbag and took it to work everyday. Ah. We had no television. My Mum got rid of the television when I was seven years old. So there was no TV. I grew up without TV. Obviously no video. No, nothing.

And so for a good six months, till the school year began, I was held hostage like that.

Mmm.

It was just - (sigh)

Mmm.

Yes. Just stuck. For six months.

Did you read?

Yes.

You had books?

Yeah. We had books. My Mum would take me to -

So you liked books? You were good with reading?

I mean, that’s what kept me going, was the books. Was reading.

Mmm.

And the local library. To this day I’m still drawn to the local library. Wherever I am, I just feel at peace in the library.

Mmm.

You know. I just curl up and just -

Yeah.

Be tranquil and somewhere else.

That would help you with your reading and writing. And the course you’re doing is the reading and, you know, professional reading.

Like. So that was how that was. And in Year 10, 1994, I went - Mum involved me in Willoughby Girls High. And, um, there I met two girls who were to become my best
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friends, Joanna and Priscilla. And Joanna had a worse - She was already in a refuge when I met her. And, ah, she was the one that figured out what was going on.

IN: Oh. Yeah.
S: After all these years. My friends knew what was going on. But the adults couldn’t figure it out.
IN: Yes.
S: Or they didn’t care. Or my Mum was too cunning.
IN: Or they were too frightened.
S: Too frightened. So nobody called DOCS. Nobody did anything. And it was the girls I went to school with who knew, and who were worried. But they were thirteen and fourteen year old girls. What can you do?
IN: Nothing. Nothing.
S: Yeah. So I remember coming to school one day covered in scratches. Finger marks around my throat. The whole lot. And Joanna said, ‘What happened to you?’ And I said my usual. ‘Walked into a door’. And she said, ‘Bullshit’.
IN: Mmm.
S: And I sort of went, ‘Yeah’. And she’s like, you know, ‘We’ve got to get you out of there’. And, um, so we sort of started planning, and she also told me - Like she was in a refuge and whatnot. And her story was worse than mine is. That, you know, she - Um. Her parents, real parents, I think separated, divorced, sort of early on and there was her and her older sister, Christine. Then, um, their mother remarried.
IN: Mmm.
S: She said, ‘That’s bullshit. You’re getting belted, aren’t you?’ I didn’t know what to say. It was the first time somebody had actually figured it out.
IN: Yeah.
S: And I sort of went, ‘Yeah’. And she’s like, you know, ‘We’ve got to get you out of there’. And, um, so we sort of started planning, and she also told me - Like she was in a refuge and whatnot. And her story was worse than mine is. That, you know, she - Um. Her parents, real parents, I think separated, divorced, sort of early on and there was her and her older sister, Christine. Then, um, their mother remarried.
IN: Mmm.
S: Their stepfather - And I think she had several children with him. So they had half-brothers and sisters. Anyway, he was a cruel, abusive man and, towards the end of the marriage, he had fallen in love with a much younger kindergarten teacher. And, um, he wanted to be rid of his wife.
IN: Mmm.
S: So, ah, one day he orchestrated it that he took a knife out of the knife block, stabbed her thirty-five times to death, and buried her under Joanna’s bedroom.
IN: Lovely.
S: And told the police, ‘Well she left this morning and went to get on a bus somewhere, and she never came back’. And apparently the cops were suspicious. They searched the place, couldn’t find anything. And all those kids knew.
IN: Mmm.
S: And that’s how they were kept in line. ‘Do you want to end up like your mother?’
IN: Mmm. Terrified. Yeah.
S: And I remember Joanna telling me that, and I believed her. And I think people thought she was a liar, just wanting attention. But for us. She was vindicated in 1990 - Was it ’96? It was the front page of the Manly Daily at least. That house was knocked down and her mother’s skeleton was found under the house.

IN: Mmm. Lovely.

S: And the really sick thing was, this - Um. The stepfather got his woman. And she knew.

IN: Oh dear.

S: That bitch knew.

IN: Yes.

S: That his ex-wife, his wife, was murdered and buried under the house.

IN: Mmm.

S: It was a Housing Commission home. And she knew. It was in French’s Forest. A nice area in the North Shore of Sydney. She knew.

IN: Mmm.

S: She knew. And she continued living in that house with her kids.

IN: You’d be very worried about your own future, wouldn’t you?

S: Well, you would, wouldn’t you?

IN: Sure.

S: He died of a heart attack in ’93. So he never faced earthly justice.

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

S: But, um, that bitch knew. She knew. (laughs) You know. That - Oh. And it wasn’t until they knocked down the house that - So Joanna had it worse than me. She had it worse than me.

IN: Mmm.

S: And, uh. Anyway, during that year, ’94, Mum and I were disagreeing all the time. I’d begun to realize other people didn’t live like this.

IN: Yes.

S: And this is a pattern. I’ve realized, of other abused children. That you just assume that everybody else lives like this.

IN: That’s right. I mean, they’ve never known anything else.

S: No. Anything else. I mean. Um. And, of course, that can be quite worrying for abusive parents. Especially with little kids. Because little kids will just blurt things out.

IN: Yeah. It’s happening to everybody. So everybody knows.
S: I do remember this as a Second Grader. For some reason Year 2 classes were in the - Um. One of the rec. rooms. And I don’t know. We were talking about bad behavior or something and - Um. The teacher asked me, ‘What would you do in this situation?’ I remember piping up, ‘Well, I’d take off the kids shoes and beat them around the head with them’.

IN: (laughs)

S: And the teachers just looked at me. None of the kids looked at me. And I went home and told my Mum that. My Mum grabbed me by the shoulders, around the neck, and said, ‘What did you say? What did you say?’

IN: Yeah.

S: 'Don’t you ever, ever tell anybody what goes on here’.

IN: Mmm.

S: ‘25 Cromwell Street’. You know, Fred West and her - One of his daughters wrote a book about what went on there, which was just sick and wrong. But I recognize the abuse of power.

IN: Yes. Yes.

S: The things they said.

IN: …… and all those things.

S: All those things that she didn’t realize until she got into high school. This wasn’t normal.

IN: Mmm.

S: Other people didn’t live like this and -

IN: Yes.

S: You know. Other books written by other children who were abused.

IN: Mmm.

S: You know. I recognize the patterns. Like, you know, the behavior and all that.

IN: Yes. Frightening.


IN: Mmm.

S: That my Mum was really, really weird.

IN: Mmm.

S: I wasn’t allowed to go anywhere, do anything. The whole shebang. So Mum started to get more violent.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

S: She realized that I was, you know, that I was growing away from her. You know, that she made me sick. I mean, the last year I lived with her, I hated her.

IN: Yes.

S: I can honestly say, I hated her.

IN: And you’ve never been reconciled with her?

S: No. No. Once in ’97 she came down.

IN: Mmm.

S: Um. For Christmas. And it seemed all right at the time. But, we stayed in contact for a couple of months, and then it all blew up again.

IN: Yeah.

S: My Mum wanted to control me again.

IN: Yes.

S: That was the whole thing.

IN: Yes.

S: She didn’t like Jim, the guy who I was with at the time. Um. She didn’t like him, and she was prepared to pay my way back to Sydney.

IN: Mmm.

S: As long as I, when I got there, I did everything that she said.

IN: Yes.

S: She actually wrote me a letter with that in it. With those exact words.

IN: So it’s all control still?

S: It’s all control. And then Jim and I had a big fight one night, and I rang her up or something from a pay phone. And we got into a big fight. She said, ‘Don’t you ever, ever contact me ever again. I never want to hear from you as long as I live’. I thought, ‘Great. It’s no worry for me’. (laughs) So that was -

IN: So now you know where you stand.

S: Yeah. So that was seven years ago. That was ’98, the last contact I had with Mum.

IN: Mum.

S: And the last contact with anyone else in the family’s had, ah, from her, would be about the time of the Sydney Olympics.

IN: Mum’s dropped contact with everybody in the family. And Dad, Dad actually wrote Mum a note about three weeks ago. She would have received it a fortnight ago. She hasn’t responded.

IN: No response. Yeah.

S: No response. You know. I just think it’s - She’s just running. Running and running and running.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

IN: Mmm.
S: She won't face reality. Face reality. And she runs. That’s been her big thing.
IN: Mmm.
S: She cuts people off, and she runs.
IN: Mmm.
S: That’s her pattern. And so - Anyway Year 10, I was realizing people don’t live like this. This is wrong.
IN: Yeah.
S: And Joanna knew what was going on at home. And then right around, just before Kurt Cobane committed suicide.
IN: Mmm.
S: Um. Things really got to a head and - Um. Mum bought me a Walkman, and I was so happy. I listened to it all the time and everything. And my Mum had the hearing of, like an elephant. She could hear something five streets away. Um. So anyway, one night I was in the bedroom listening to it in bed, and Mum could obviously hear it in the next room. And she just lost the plot. She, she just came into the room and she, she jumped on my - Two knees into my back, and just started punching me in the head. She ripped the Walkman out of my ears and threw it against the wall, and smashed it. Um.
Then she pulled my hair back, took the pillow from underneath my head, then put it over my head. And put all her weight down.
IN: Mmm.
S: And. Oh. I realized that I had to get out of there.
IN: Yes.
S: And realized she was going to kill me. She was going to kill me. I don’t know what stopped her.
IN: Mmm.
S: On me. While she was kneeling on my back. So I had no choice. She was attempting to smother me to death.
IN: Mmm.
S: And. Oh. I realized that I had to get out of there.
IN: Yes.
S: And realized she was going to kill me. She was going to kill me. I don’t know what stopped her.
IN: But something?
S: Something obviously stopped her.
IN: Yeah.
S: But I knew that, that things would be really bad.
IN: Where did you picture yourself living if you left?
S: Ah. Well, I had no idea.
IN: That’s what I was going to say. You were pretty young.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

S: Yeah. Ah. Friends’ places. Oh. ‘Cause Joanna was living in a refuge. I thought, ‘Oh. Well, I’ll go to a refuge. And that’s what ended up happening. The abuse was just so bad at that point. You know, Mum trying to murder me. I went to school with my smashed Walkman, and showed Joanna. And my other friend lent me one of her Walkmans. Well, I had no privacy at home, Mum would regularly go through my stuff. And about a week after that incident, the smothering incident, Mum went through my schoolbag and found my friend Hilary’s Walkman. And that was about six o’clock in the morning.

IN: Mmm.

S: And so that Walkman went into the wall. I was pulled out of bed by my hair. I was half asleep, defenceless. And Mum just laid into me, kicking me in the stomach, in the head. The whole bit. Just bad. Then she took all the money I had, which was like ten dollars. I had my ……. I think it was the start of the school holidays. So I was another two weeks of being a hostage. Mum taking the phone to work most days. Um. And I realized that I have to get out of here. She is going to kill me.

IN: Mmm.

S: She’s going to kill me. And. Um. So. Yeah. I think it was after the school holidays. Um. Joanna and I made arrangements. ‘She said, ‘You can come and stay the night at where I am, and I’ll find you, put you in another refuge. OK’. So the next morning, I just went home, got up to go to school in the morning, put my school uniform on. I took my backpack, put some school books in it, walked out. And that was it.

IN: That was it.

S: That was it. I did come back a week later, I took out an AVO against my mother. And I went back with the police to ah, get my stuff, about a week or two weeks later. And we lived on the top, in the top unit. And - Um. When I got up to the top of the stairs with the two policemen, my mother opened the door and she said, ‘Can you two wait downstairs? I want to have some time with my daughter’, And the officer just looked her straight in the face and said, “No Mam. We stay here’.

IN: Mmm.

S: And - Um. My mother was really taken aback. Because no-one said, ‘No’, to her.

IN: Yeah.

S: And so I just took all my stuff and, ah, left. I can’t remember who those officers were. Even their faces are blurred by time. But they were good to me.

IN: Yeah.

S: They took me to McDonalds and everything on the way back to the refuge and, ah - No. They were great. You know. They knew, they believed me. They knew.

IN: Well, something drives a kid to a refuge.

S: Yeah. Yeah. And so that was it. The AVO went to court a couple of months later. And I lost. She was horrible. Ah. It was done in North Sydney Magistrate’s Court, not the Children’s Court. And it wasn’t a closed court.

IN: Oh. Yeah.

S: I was fifteen. They didn’t close it. So I had all those vultures that just sit there and watch other people’s misery.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

IN: Yeah.

838 S: You know, the ones that have nothing better to do but just sit there and watch other
839 people’s lives fall apart. And - Um. My mother had a lawyer. And I’d left my diary at
840 home, and my mother’s lawyer used that. Read bits of that out to the court.
841
842 IN: Mmm.
843
844 S: I was cross-examined by him and, ah, the prosecutor, the youth workers, the police
845 officers, they knew my mother was lying through her teeth.
846
847 IN: Yeah.
848
849 S: Even when she got up on the stand. ‘Oh. I’ve never laid a hand on my daughter in my
850 life’. And everybody knew she lied.
851
852 IN: Mmm.
853
854 S: Except for the Judge. And the Judge looked at her and looked at me. And here I am
855 this half-caste juvenile delinquent, up against my mother. Middle class, you know,
856 white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. Good job. And the Judge wouldn’t renew the AVO. He
857 just said, ‘Oh. This is a sad situation. Mother and daughter should live together’.
858
859 IN: Mmm.
860
861 S: So that was that. And I was extremely upset. And the look that my mother had on her
862 face when she walked past me, was a big smirk. This smirk.
863
864 IN: Mmm. Yeah. Dreadful
865
866 S: You know. So. Yeah. So that’s - I lived in the refuges and I left school a couple of
867 months after that. I mean -
868
869 IN: Mmm.
870
871 S: I was moving around a lot. Um. It was fun. It was exciting.
872
873 IN: Mmm. Finally out in the world.
874
875 S: You know. Yeah. Oh look. I was still pretty green. You know. I remember going to
876 King’s Cross and Paddington for the first time.
877
878 IN: Mmm.
879
880 S: I like - Wow. Ohhh. You know. And King’s Cross is just a spinout. With all the, you
881 know, prostitutes and the clubs and the dealing on the streets. And here I am. This
882 green kid from the North Shore. Ohhh.
883
884 IN: (laughs)
885
886 S: And - Um. Yeah. No. It was just - Looked so great and exciting.
887
888 IN: And you got involved?
889
890 S: Oh. Of course I got involved. Yeah. I mean, I’d moved refuges, you know. Short term
891 accommodation. Where you move one to the other.
892 I lived up, living in one caretakers in Surry Hills, in this big, old, old, three storey
893 townhouse. And - Um. It was falling apart. And - Um. Yeah. No. It was only ten
894 minutes to King’s Cross. And so I hooked up with people in there. By this time I’d
895 dropped out of school.
896
897
IN: Mmm.

S: I was living there when I did. And it was a rainy day. And I just thought, ‘I don’t need school anymore’. So I went over to Willoughby on the way from Surry Hills, and I just walked into the Principal’s office, and I just said, ‘I’m leaving’.

IN: Mmm.

S: She said, ‘Right. See you later’. I think every kid’s dream. Walk into the Principal’s office.

IN: Yeah.


She sort of semi tried to persuade me not to. But it was like, ‘No. I’m not interested. Forget it!’. So that was done and I went back. So now I didn’t have job, wasn’t in school. Um. Suddenly had, you know, the money from Centrelink. And you know, it was like, ‘Wow!’

IN: Yeah.

S: Cool. You know. It was sort of a long curfew or what. In the end, I think you had to be home by nine o’clock or something. But, to me, that was just - Hooo.

IN: Yeah. (laughs) Freedom.

S: Yeah. Of course, living so close to the Cross and everything.

IN: Yeah.

S: You know. And having a bit of spare money. And it was all fun. It was like - Yeah. ‘This is really cool’. And so I ended up getting onto heroin by this girl Kelly, who I lived with in the refuge. And - Um. She actually asked me one day if I wanted to chuck in to buy speed.

IN: Mmm.

S: And I said, ‘Yeah. Hey’. And - Um. I did. And it was a portent of things to come. Because Kelly got ripped off. And - Um. It didn’t mean anything to me. I was, ‘Oh well. So what? Whatever’. So one night, a couple of weeks later, we decided to go up and score some dope. You know, this was just to smoke. And, ah, we got up to the Cross, and we couldn’t find anything.

IN: Mmm.

S: You know. Which was smack. And Kelly said, ‘Oh. Do you want to?’. And I didn’t want to look like a dickhead and say, ‘Oh. No’. You know. So I said, ‘Yeah. Yeah. Cool. Whatever’. And so that’s how it started. And we scored and went down to this -
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

Um. It’s gone now, it’s been built over. This old, this underpass underneath the freeway. Full of rubbish and old syringes. And occasionally dead bodies. Because people would OD down there, and nobody would find them.

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

S: You know. It was dark and dingy and all that. So we went down there, and, of course, I needed nothing to get off. And I couldn’t even inject myself. So I had to be injected. And I got something like ten lines out of an eighty dollar cap. Which is nothing. Going between four people. That’s nothing.


S: And I was off the planet. I was like. ‘God!’ It was the most, just incredible feeling. ‘Oh God!’ And anyway we ended staying out all night. Missing curfew. Um. She knew a couple of Koori’s, so we went down to one of these guys houses and found some dope and smoked. And we were, ‘God!’ So when we got to the refuge in the morning, we were both in trouble.

IN: Yeah.

S: Um. Kelly was sent to rehab. Kelly was sent to rehab by her social worker. And my social worker didn’t do anything with me. She was like, ‘Right’. And, of course, that - Um. That one time just -

IN: Just escalated.

S: Just escalated. You know.

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Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

1018  S: And so - And of course, to support my habit, the dole wasn’t going to support my habit. You know. You know, you can have friends that shout you every now and again, but that’s not going to take care of -

1020  IN: The lot of money you need. Yeah.

1023  S: So one day, it was at night, hanging around the Wall in Green Park. Um. I see a couple of girls working and whatnot. Needed drugs and - Yeah. 1 - The other girl said, ‘Oh. See that guy driving around, he’s a client of mine. Why don’t you go with him?”

1028  IN: Mmm.

1030  S: So I did. And I don’t know how old he was. Oh God. Probably forty-five or something.

1036  IN: Mmm. Mmm.  S: I don’t know. Anyway I did the job and - (sigh) You know, you know, it was weird. Like. So. ‘OK. I just slept with a guy for money. OK’.

1042  IN: Yeah. Well, you needed the money at the time.

1046  S: That’s how it happened. So that too became more frequent when I realized. Hold on -

1049  IN: This is a way of getting money.

1052  S: This is a way of getting money.

1056  IN: Yes.

1060  S: And so - Yes. Then I would be down there every night.

1064  IN: Yes.

1069  S: Working. And I was sixteen. I was sixteen when I tuned my first trick and - Um. Yeah. Then it became -

1074  IN: Regular.

1078  S: Regular. Yeah. So I was well known to - Um. You know, the food van.

1082  IN: Yes.

1087  S: It stopped in the park. And the - Um. Kirkland Road Centre there. Known to all of them. All the outreach workers. You know, and at that point it was still cool and kind of tough and stuff. But, you know, and looking back now and seeing that, especially some of those outreach workers, were workers who I knew from when I lived in their refuges before.

1091  IN: Yes.

1096  S: Before I started using. While I was just fresh, a fresh kid from the North Shore. I could see them just thinking, ‘Oh my God!’

1099  IN: Yes.

1103  S: You know?

1107  IN: Yeah.
S: You know, and I thought it was really cool. I’m like, ‘I don’t know what you’re worried about. What do you mean?’

IN: Yeah.

S: And - Um. Yeah. So that’s what happened. I’d been booted out of every refuge. I had an escalating heroin habit that I had to work the streets to support. I also had a boyfriend who had an escalating heroin habit that I had to support too.

IN: Mmm.

S: Um. So obviously when I got paid my dole, the money would be all gone in one day.

IN: Mmm. Mmm.

S: Um. And of course - There you go. And I learnt all about getting ripped off, getting raped. Um.

IN: Yeah. Were the people cruel? The blokes cruel to you?

S: Some.

IN: As a general thing?

S: No. I mean, I had some - You know, there were some guys that were really, like regular clients. They were really nice, they were really nice men, they were good men. I mean -

IN: It was like you’re offering a service. And they paid?

S: They paid and were good. I mean, looking back on it now, they knew how old I was. So it was like men in their forties, fifties. So -

IN: Mmm.

S: You’ve kind of got to wonder. But, anyway, it was good at the time. They were nice to me. Guaranteed money. Good to me.

IN: Yeah.

S: They’d give me perfume and stuff. And clothes.

IN: Yes.

S: You know. Take me out and all that kind of stuff. But - Um. Yeah. There were a few that were arseholes.

IN: Mmm.

S: And - Um. Yeah. Probably the worst time was - Ah. God! (silence) Getting into a car, this man, he took me to, ah, Moore Park. Tennis courts at Moore Park. Which is amazingly just across from the SCG. Every time I go to the SCG, I’ve got to -

IN: It comes back to you?

S: Comes back every time.

IN: Yeah.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

1138 S: And - Um. Yep. Got out of the car. He suddenly produced this big Bowie knife. He's like, 'Take your clothes off, bitch'. I'm like, 'Ohhh dear!'

1139 IN: Mmm.

1140 S: And so we're talking - Anzac Parade is like fifty metres away from where we were. And there were people playing tennis on the tennis courts. Yep. And this guy - Well. Well. What can you say?

1141 IN: Yeah.

1142 S: And then when he got back in the car, he actually drove me back. And he turned to me and said, 'Would you like to come back to my place for a cup of coffee?'

1143 IN: (laugh) Oh God!

1144 S: I'm like, 'Oh fuck! I've got to get away from you'.

1145 IN: Yeah.

1146 S: And so then he sort of dropped me off. And he said, 'Right. Turn around. Don't look'. And that was another place. Blah. Blah. Blah. And I was right near Oasis, and I ran down the ramp. And John, the worker, he knew as soon as he looked at me. I just collapsed at his feet. He's like, 'Oh my God!' And so he took me to hospital.

1147 IN: Mmm.

1148 S: And all that. And I reported it to the police. They didn't give a fuck.

1149 IN: Yes. Yes.

1150 S: They were so indifferent, it was just a joke.

1151 IN: Yes.

1152 S: They were just like, 'Well sweetheart, occupational hazard'.

1153 IN: Oh God!

1154 S: 'You're a street girl. What the hell do you expect?'

1155 IN: Oh. Wow!

1156 S: And that was to happen twice when I went to report a rape to the police.

1157 IN: Oh God!

1158 S: That occurred when I was working. They didn't care. And the same thing with other girls.

1159 IN: Mmm.

1160 S: That occurred when I was working. They didn't care. And the same thing with other girls.

1161 IN: Mmm.

1162 S: And I was one of the lucky ones. Um. I had a friend - Or she wasn't my friend, we were acquaintances. We knew each other. Her name was Charlie. And - Um. She, you know, worked the streets and was, you know, using. But apparently she was like on methadone and getting on the straight and narrow. And, ah, anyway, we talked to each
other and we saw each other and everything like that. And, uh, one night I was back
down the, you know, bottom of William Street working. And two coppers - So the cops
would drive around. Well, they didn’t do anything to us girls. Yeah. They knew who
we were and we knew who they were.

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

S: You know. And there were some good cops at King’s Cross. And these two coppers
that I knew because they busted me for soliciting one -

IN: Mmm.

S: But, you know, they were cool. And I think - Um. Yeah. Anyway they - Um. They
drove past and they sort of beckoned me over and said, ‘How are you going? OK?’
And like, ‘Do you know this girl?’ And they showed me a photo of Charlie.

IN: Mmm. Mmm. God!

S: ‘Oh my God!’ And then I realized I had seen that. Because a client was driving me
home that morning, and the whole area behind, um, the Wall was taped off.

IN: Oh. Right.

S: With some crime scene tape. And I thought, ‘Oh. I wonder what’s going on there’.

IN: Oh dear. Yeah.

S: ‘That’s how I found out she’d been found with her throat cut. Um. Naked, shoved upside
down in a wardrobe in a back alley just behind the Wall. An alley that’s well used by
junkies. I know the alley, I’ve gone down there. Shot up many times. Done quick jobs
down there. And, um, it turned out that Charlie was the only Crown witness in a case
against a very corrupt police officer.

IN: Mmm.

S: And - Um. Yeah. She was starting to - Um. She was a Crown witness with a pretty
corrupt Cabramatta police officer involved in the whole heroin trade, Triad thing.

IN: Mmm.

S: She was the only witness. And, of course, the trial collapsed when she died.

IN: Mmm.

S: And I remember the cops coming around the night after. And this big fat cop - Like
that dude out of ‘The Simpsons’.

IN: Oh. Yes. I know.

S: …………. You know, just like him. He’s like, ‘And do you know who killed Charlie?’
And I’m like, ‘No’. I said, ‘Do you?’ And - Um. We all knew it was the police.

IN: Yeah.

S: We all knew.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

1258  IN:  Yeah.
1259  S:  You know.  We all knew.
1260  IN:  And who's going to believe you?
1261  S:  Who's going to believe you. Exactly.
1262  IN:  Who are you going to complain to?  The police?
1263  S:  Yeah. Exactly.
1264  IN:  Yes. Yes.
1265  S:  So -  In fact in '97, when I first came down here, when 'Australia's Most Wanted' was on, her murder was actually on that show.
1266  IN:  On it. Yeah. Yeah.
1267  S:  Yeah. No. Ah. You know. So that was, I guess I was lucky. I could have ended up like that. Very easily,
1268  IN:  Well, what made you, um, you know, turn around?  Decide to change. Why get out of it?
1269  S:  I met Jim. Jim was actually a client.
1270  IN:  Yes.
1271  S:  Jim was a client. And he obviously liked me.
1272  IN:  Yes.
1273  S:  Jim was a client. And he obviously liked me.
1274  IN:  Yes.
1275  S:  Jim was a client. And he obviously liked me.
1276  IN:  Yes. Yeah.
1277  S:  And, um, he -  He looked after me. You know, he'd take me out, he'd buy me stuff. He'd buy drugs for me and all that. And, um, he knew the life I was living wasn't really good. And he said, 'Well. Why don't we go back to Victoria?  Because that's where he was from.'
1278  IN:  Mmm.
1279  S:  'I'll go with you. No problem'.  (laughs)  'Yeah. I don't care where it is'.
1280  IN:  I'll go with you.
1281  S:  Yeah. 'I'll go with you. No problem'.  (laughs)  'Yes. Sure'.  So we ended up getting a fair bit of heroin.  But, of course, I had a fairly big habit too.  It wasn't till I got to Yass.
1282  IN:  Where am I?  What's happened?
1283  S:  'What the fuck'.  And anyway, you know, he talked -  I'd met his parents.  His parents had come up from Victoria.  Because I went missing for a couple of days.
1284  IN:  Mmm.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

1318  S: That’s blocked. I mean, I also was a victim, at least twice, of rape.
1319  IN: Yes.
1320  S: And that’s -
1321  IN: Yes.
1322  S: You know. Rohypnol, it’s a bugger of a drug. I mean, you take it, and you cannot remember anything.
1323  IN: Yes.
1324  S: You can’t remember anything.
1325  IN: Mmm.
1326  S: I just said, ‘I can’t remember anything’. Um. So. Yeah. When I was missing his parents had come up.
1327  IN: Mmm.
1328  S: Um. And whatnot. So. Yeah. I came down to Victoria, and Jim was like, you know, ‘Oh. Yeah Yeah. I’ll dry out when I get to Victoria’. And his sister Anne lived in Castlemaine.
1329  IN: Mmm.
1330  S: And, ah. So there I was for a week. I -
1331  IN: Mmm.
1332  S: And it was the most agonizing week of my life.
1333  IN: Mmm. Mmm.
1334  S: Coming off nearly a $2000 heroin habit.
1335  IN: And you just did it yourself?
1336  S: Yeah. With him. I mean, he had a good doctor. I was prescribed a lot of Vallium, a lot of Rohypnol too.
1337  IN: Yeah.
1338  S: And that, withdrawing that badly. And I clear, clearly remember taking eight Rohypnol in one go. Now normally one Rohypnol.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

IN: The level?

S: The level that I was there. Even with something like Rohypnol wasn’t doing anything.

IN: It wasn’t doing it. Mmm.

S: I was in agony. I mean, I was just - Oh. I was just bad. I mean, I was really, really bad. Anyway. So we were up in Castlemaine, then we moved to Melbourne. And, of course, I started all over again.

IN: Mmm.

S: Physically I was fixed. In the head though -

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

S: No. The head wasn’t fixed.

IN: Yeah.

S: So it started all over again down here. And I figured out where Footscray was, and where St Kilda was, pretty quickly.

IN: Yeah.

S: And, um, you know. So Jim gave me an ultimatum. And I kind of ran back to Sydney. Ran away back to Sydney. And he came. Come and got me.

IN: Mmm.

S: So I got on methadone. And, ah, been on it ever since.

IN: Yes. And it’s OK?

S: It’s OK. Yeah.

IN: It just keeps you together?


IN: Yeah. Yeah.

S: You know. But I realize now, that if you use on top of methadone, it’s just a waste of money.

IN: Yes.

S: You might as well just throw money in the bin.

IN: Yeah.

MJC
S: You know?

IN: Yeah.

S: It’s ridiculous. So. Yeah. So really, coming to Victoria -

IN: Was the change?

S: Was the change. Coming down here. And I still had to go through a bit of shit down here.

IN: Yeah.

S: But, um. Yeah.

IN: Yeah. Oh. Well, it’s an amazing story.

S: Jim. So Jim, and Jim’s family, were just really good to me.

IN: Yeah.

S: Over the years.

IN: Lovely.

S: They’ve been terrific. And, I mean, Jim and I sort of broke up last year. You know, and it’s sort of been - There’d been no real romantic attachment for years. But now we’re the best of friends.

IN: Mmm. That’s lovely. He’ll support you if you need him.

S: Yes. Yes. We’re very, I mean, he was at the Grand Final with me. Yeah. He was at the Grand Final.

IN: Yeah.

S: We went to the Swans family day together.

IN: Yeah.

S: You know. So we’re just very, very good friends, close friends. But -

IN: End tape Side One

S: ………… a hell of a life together.

IN: It’s nice you’ve kept that commitment with him. Yeah.

S: Yes. So -

IN: Yeah. That’s terrific. And, um. What else do I want to ask you? Oh. I missed the bit about your primary school. Were you happy when you went to primary school?

S: Yeah. I mean, I went to two different primary schools. I went to Manly Public and I went to Queenwood.

IN: Yes.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

S: School for Girls. At Queenwood, there was still a lot of racial taunts back then. And I’d cop it.

IN: Oh. Right. I never thought about race, you know. Because, you know, until you told me about – I just never thought about you coming from anywhere else.

S: Yes.

IN: So, and I think that’s part of the living in Moreland thing. Don’t you think?

S: Of course.

IN: Everybody is just everybody really, aren’t they? You know, if you’ve got a standout characteristic, you probably just sort of notice it but just move on straight away.

IN: And you don’t even think about it.

IN: Yeah.

S: The same way when I was in the streets in Sydney. You know, Oxford Street, King’s Cross. I’d say every race, every, you know, sexuality, you know, everything.

IN: Yeah.

S: But back, you know, in the early 80’s, in a place like Manly.

IN: Yeah. It would have been different.

S: Marrickville is like Coburg.

IN: Yeah. Well, that was something.

S: Yeah.

IN: Yeah.

S: And my Auntie Susan, she and my cousin Amanda in ’87, and they lived in Marrickville. And Marrickville was just like Coburg.

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

S: Mall is like Coburg.

IN: Yeah. Just the mix.

S: The same mix. You know, the ethnic mix. So Amanda was fine, then they moved down to Sutherland Shire. Um. But Auntie Susan always wondered, you know, she was like - Why Mum didn’t move over that side.

IN: Yeah.

S: But Mum was a snob. Mum didn’t, you know, she didn’t like Marrickville. She didn’t like the Inner West or the Western Suburbs.

IN: Yeah.

S: She looked down her nose. So I grew up on the North Shore. And - Yeah. At primary school - Yeah. You did get a couple of racist, racist taunts.
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1558 IN: Yeah.
1559
1560 S: When I went to Queenwood, I was the first girl of, you know, South Pacific Islander extraction to go to Queenwood. And so that was sort of difficult too.
1561 IN: Yeah. Yeah.
1562
1563 IN: Yeah.
1564 S: You know. Although I did make friends. I did make friends pretty easily.
1565 IN: Mmm. Mmm.
1566 S: But with this spanner in the works, was that my Mum didn’t let me go anywhere or do anything.
1568 S: Yeah. Exactly. A lot of people thought I was a snob. Because I’d always say, ‘No’, to their invitations. I wouldn’t tell them where I lived.
1569 IN: Yeah.
1570 IN: That it was a restriction. Yeah.
1571 S: Yeah. Yeah. I did OK. I was a pretty good student. You know, education. What I got marks-wise.
1572 IN: Yeah. Yeah.
1573 S: And they didn’t realize it was that I couldn’t.
1574 IN: Yeah.
1575 S: That it was a restriction. Yeah.
1576 IN: Yeah. Yeah. I did OK. I was a pretty good student. You know, education. What I got marks-wise.
1577 IN: Yes. Yes.
1578 S: But that all started going downhill at high school.
1579 IN: Yeah. But you could pick it. You know, when you first came to us. I told you at the time, you know, you just identify that intelligence. You know, by the way people talk. And just the things they’ve learned and their experiences. We pick that up.
1580 S: Um.
1581 IN: Or- How did you find out about us?
1582 S: Good question.
1583 IN: Can you remember?
1584 S: I think I found out - I think it might have been on a noticeboard in Brunswick Library.
1585 IN: Oh. Yes. Yes.
1586 S: I think something like that.
1587 IN: Yeah. that’s right. You were in- In the Library.
1588 S: In the Library.
1589 IN: (laughs)
1590 S: Libraries are always good to be in, you know. Libraries are good places. And - Um. Yeah. No. I’d been at - In 2000 I sort of wanted to do something. So I went to one of the local Neighbourhood Houses, and I did a couple of, you know, I did some sewing classes there. I helped out in the Brunswick Neighbourhood House. And that was good.
And I, I thought, you know, I’d sort of kind of like to continue my education in some way or something.

IN: Mmm.

S: And - Um. Yes. I must have seen the notice in the Library. I just thought, ‘OK’.

IN: Now is your chance.

S: Yeah.

IN: Yeah. We put you in a VCE class. Is that right?

S: Yeah.

IN: English. I did English. I did History. And I did Psychology.

IN: Oh. That’s right.


IN: Yeah. Yeah. That’s right. And you enjoyed that?

S: Yes. I did. I enjoyed that very much. And I enjoyed, you know, the classes.

IN: What did you like about it though, when you came in? What was sort of different? Because you’d been to school.

S: Yeah.

IN: It wasn’t like going back to school?

S: No. No. It just was really supportive. It was just really supportive. And people of all ages groups and all ethnic backgrounds.

IN: Mmm.

S: And, ah, all different circumstances.

IN: Mmm.

S: And there was no judgment. And there was no pressure. And all those things, you know. I just thought, ‘Gee. This is really good!’

IN: Oh. Yeah.

S: It was local. And. Yeah.

IN: That’s good.

S: Yeah. I just felt -

IN: Well, I know you took to it like a duck to water. (laughs)

S: Yeah. No. I really enjoyed my time.

IN: Yeah.
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1677  S:  There.  I mean Heather - I did the part of Diploma of Further Education.
1678  IN:  Further Ed.  Yeah.
1679  S:  And I just really enjoyed it.
1680  IN:  Yeah.
1681  S:  I just liked all the different people that came in.  You know.  No.  Yeah.  No judgments, no pressure.  And it was all just friendly.  And being able to meet different people.  Yeah.
1682  IN:  Mmm.  That’s really good.  Yes.  And do you think - And you haven’t been around much lately, have you?  But do you think it’s changed at all?
1683  S:  I dropped in - Like my boyfriend, Val, is doing a computer class at the moment.
1684  IN:  Mmm.
1685  S:  And, I mean - And Dave’s doing, doing that.  And it seemed - No.  It’s just from what I’ve seen.
1686  IN:  That drop-in factor?
1687  S:  That drop-in factor.  All that informal kind of thing.  And that’s, that’s really good.  Because when you try to go back to school -
1688  IN:  Mmm.
1689  S:  The last thing you need I think is a - Lots of - I don’t know.  A formality.
1690  IN:  Yes.
1691  S:  Things like that, with sort of a lot of strict deadlines.  And sort of maybe, people really judgmental.
1692  IN:  Yes.
1693  S:  You know, university thing or -
1695  IN:  Yes.  Oh.  That’s really good.  And you’re going where?  You’re going to RMIT, aren’t you?
1696  S:  Right.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

1737 IN: Do you find it very different?
1738
1739 S: Yes. I do.
1740
1741 IN: Yes?
1742
1743 S: Yes. For sure. I mean, my computer classes, like Desktop Publishing and Photography, they had that drop-in factor. My teacher, he’s very laid back. *(name)* is very laid back and whatnot. But I guess that the people that are in that course are different. A lot of them are already hold Degrees. They already work in the industry. Um. They’ve travelled a lot. It’s not the same. And then you have the people, and they have life experience.
1752
IN: Yes. Yes.
1753 S: You know.
1754 IN: Well, you had about ten lives yourself.
1755
1756 S: *(laughs)* People, they’d have their stories. And they have that life experience and whatnot. I’m not saying that people don’t have that life experience at RMIT, but it’s of a different nature. It’s more of that, that suburban path of, you know, grow up, go to primary school, go to high school, graduate. Have your, you know, your gap year.
1760
IN: Yeah.
1761 S: Then on to uni.
1762 IN: Yeah.
1763
1764 S: And do your Degree.
1765 IN: Traditional path.
1766
1767 S: Traditional path.
1768 IN: Mmm.
1769
1770 S: You know. And get a job, and all that kind of stuff. And that’s a bit hard. And it’s hard to relate to that, you know. I can relate to people.
1777
1778 IN: Yes.
1779 S: I think that’s the big thing. I can relate to them.
1780 IN: Mmm.
1781
1782 S: You know. Whereas a lot of the people at RMIT, I can’t.
1786
1787 IN: Yeah.
1788 S: A lot of the people.
1789 IN: So they’ve sort of had a restricted life if you like.
1790
1791 S: Yes.
1792 IN: Compared with the multicultural, disability, everything life.
1796
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 31st March, 2004

1797  S: Yes.
1798
1799  IN: Oh. That’s a really good point. Because a lot of people have mentioned other things. Like changes in computers and money and all that. But not the actual types of participants.
1800
1801  IN: So that’s interesting, that you’ve noticed that.
1802  S: Yes. You either have the one, not so much in our course, they don’t take the school leavers.
1803
1804  IN: Um. But you do see the other kids in the other courses’, ah, building. You know, fresh out of high school.
1805  S: You know. They’ve got all the flash clothes, and the new iPod, and the latest phone. All that. And, you know, that Mummy and Daddy’s bought it for them. They’re still living at home.
1806  IN: Yes.
1807  S: Oh. Yeah. It’s completely different over there. You know. And so - Yeah. You have the people in our course who - Um. Yeah. They’ve got, they’ve already done a Degree. They’ve gone overseas, lived overseas. They’ve got, you know, a flash job or that. And although they’ve had life experience. But they’ve never had to do it hard. Tough.
1808  IN: Yes. Mmm.
1809  S: You know. They’ve always had families around them. Always been able to go home and live with Mummy and Daddy or something. If it hasn’t worked out, it’s always been an option.
1810  IN: That’s right.
1811  S: You know.
1812  IN: And that’s the difference. Because that’s very rarely the people who come to ACE, isn’t it?
1813  IN: Do you think?
1814  S: Yeah. I think so.
1815  IN: The people you’ve met earlier on. Yeah. That’s true.
1816  S: That’s the thing. I mean, you’ve got to learn to rely on yourself.
1817  IN: Mmm.
1818  S: You know. How to deal with situations, and even things like dealing with Centrelink.
1819  IN: Yes.

Comment [IN1280]: HE students
Comment [IN1281]: Never done it tough
Comment [p1282]: Mummy & Daddy-derided
Comment [p1283]: Self-reliance
Comment [IN1284]: Centrelink
S: Stuff like that.
IN: Yeah.
S: You know. I know a lot of people I know, they wouldn’t have a clue how to start. They don’t know how to claim assistance.
IN: Mmm.
S: They don’t know. They don’t know how to do it. You know, how to work it out like that.
IN: Yes.
S: You know, real life. They wouldn’t know what to do if they were suddenly booted out on their arse on the streets.
IN: Mmm.
S: And had nowhere to go. They wouldn’t know what to do.
IN: Yeah.
S: They’d have no idea.
IN: Yeah. They wouldn’t know where to get help.
S: Yeah. Exactly. They wouldn’t know. They wouldn’t know what to do.
IN: (laughs)
S: So, you know, that’s hard. So obviously relating to people like that is difficult.
IN: Yes.
S: Because there’s no common denominator in a lot of cases.
IN: That’s right.
S: The common denominator is we’re both in the same course. But that’s it.
IN: Mmm.
S: And that’s what surprised me, and maybe daunted me, when I first got into RMIT.
IN: Mmm.
S: I thought, ‘Oh great. There’s going to be all these people’. And they’re, you know, all these similar people. And that wasn’t the case.
IN: Yes.
S: You know. The first year’s really hard.
S: Um. I really felt. And I knew that some people just really were going down their nose at me. Certain things. I’d sit in class and whatnot. You know, people like, ‘OK. Here’s one out of the box’. So that’s really -

IN: Yes. And yet that’s what we find gives a richness to it. Doesn’t it?

S: Yes. Exactly. Yes.

IN: Yes.

S: Precisely. So that was really different. And - Um. Then I got to the point that I didn’t give a shit.

IN: Yeah.

S: Really. Think what you like. I don’t care.

IN: I don’t care. Yeah.

S: I don’t need, you know, some, you know, some university graduate to, you know, validate my existence.

IN: Mmm. Mmm.

S: You know. You know, I don’t need that validation.

IN: Well, if you look at it, you know, you’ve had to struggle so much to get where you are. You know, I mean they’ve had it easy. That’s the difference, isn’t it?

S: Yeah.

IN: Yes.

S: You know. I mean, I don’t even have a passport. I mean, meeting Dad, I mean - Um. I’m going through the stages of getting a passport. But I mean, like I’ve never been outside of the country.

IN: Mmm.

S: You know. And - Um. A lot of the people who, um, I go to school with - I mean -

IN: They’re always going overseas.

S: They’re always overseas. Exactly.

IN: (laughs)

S: Exactly. During school break this one girl came in. Um. Oh. She’d been to France for the whole holidays.

IN: Not visiting relatives or anything?

S: No. No. You know.

IN: Yes.

S: And this one guy in my Desktop Publishing class, his major assessment is - Um. He’s putting together like a book with all of his experiences when he went through South America.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

1977  IN:  (laughs)
1978
1979  S:  You know. And I’m kind of like -
1980
1981  IN:  And you’re thinking maybe you could put together a Centrelink -
1982
1983  S:  Yeah. You know a - (laughs) Um. How to live rough. And maybe hand it out to a few people.
1984
1985
1986  IN:  Yes. (laughs) You know, life really.
1987
1989
1990  IN:  Yes.
1991
1992  S:  You know, nipping off overseas to Europe and that during the school holidays. You know, a couple of weeks.
1993
1994  IN:  So there’s no reason then?
1995
1996  S:  No. It’s not to visit the - Oh. Well. I just go over here. It’s like, you know. that’s where I’m not relating.
1997
1999
2001
2002  S:  You know.
2003
2004  IN:  One of the other guys said this to me too. Because he got an interview for a bridging course at Melbourne Uni. He said almost those exact words. He said, ‘I was the only one with Kmart sneakers. And also he said they were saying, ‘Are you going OS during the holidays?’ And he said, ‘Where was I going?’ He said, ‘Maybe the footy ground’.
2005
2006  S:  (laughs) Exactly. You know. I’m really big - An obviously huge Swans supporter.
2007
2008
2009  S:  Big on the footy.
2010  IN:  Yeah.
2011
2012
2013  IN:  Yeah.
2014
2015  S:  And I think that’s a source of amusement to a lot of people, kids at RMIT. It’s a real source of amusement.
2016
2017  IN:  Oh. Is it?
2018
2019  S:  Yeah. I think so. In my Desktop Publishing class and that. It’s a real source of amusement. That, you know, for a girl to be right into the footy.
2020
2021
2022  IN:  Yeah.
2023
2024  S:  I mean, most of those people, especially the girls -
2025
2026  IN:  But there are crowds now. It’s huge.
2027
2028  S:  Yes. Sure.
2029
2030  S:  For women to be into cricket and football.
2031
2032  S:  Yeah. Sure.
2033
2034  IN:  It’s huge. I wouldn’t worry about that too much, if they’re well behind the times.
2035
2036

MJC
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

S: Exactly. Yeah.
IN: Yeah.
S: But - Um. No. It’s generally only the guys that follow footy. And even then it’s not - Um. Yeah. No. But the girls - Yeah. No. They just don’t. They just don’t.
IN: Well, that’s unusual, isn’t it? Yeah.
S: It is. It is. Yeah.
IN: You could understand if they were sort of ethnic minorities and then liked soccer. But it’s not that.
S: Yes. It’s not that. No.
IN: Is that what you’re saying? They don’t think it’s cool.
S: I guess so. Maybe it’s a bit working class or -
IN: It may be. I know quite a bit about footy. (laughs)
S: So -
IN: Oh. That’s interesting.
S: So that’s the attitude from people as you go from say Adult Community into university. The people are different, the attitudes different.
IN: Yes.
S: Um. The lecturers. I had one, my evening teacher, she just didn’t get me. She just didn’t get it at all.
IN: Mmm.
S: You know. Just didn’t.
IN: Mmm. Bit strange, isn’t it? For that.
S: Yeah. Exactly.
IN: Yes.
S: Somebody said, ‘Look. She doesn’t understand. She’s had it easy her whole life’. You know.
IN: Yes.
S: Grew up in a suburban family. Went to primary school, went to high school, went overseas, travelled around overseas. Came back, went to uni., steady job, the whole bit. Support of family, met her husband, married her husband, had children and went back into the workforce again. And then she’s teaching here. So -
IN: No highs and lows.

Comment [IN1300]: Working class
Comment [IN1301]: ACE and HE
Comment [IN1302]: class
Comment [IN1303]: STORY
S: Exactly. And a lot of the people in this course - So many people from overseas, possibly coming from overseas. Yet their actual life experience is low.

IN: Yes. They’re limited.

S: They’re limited. Yeah. Even the ones, you know, the ones you see that are going around with the dreadlocks and the goth clothes and the punk clothes. Just scratch the surface, scratch the surface, you’re gonna find a middle-class suburban kid under there.

IN: Children playing dress-ups. You mightn’t have done a lot of it, but at least you’ve heard about it.

S: Yeah.

IN: (laughs) And you’ve approved of it. So it’s all the same.

S: Yeah.

IN: You know. Scratch any of those middle-class -

S: Exactly.

IN: And I think that’s the good thing I like about it too. Is that nobody stands out for any reason.

S: No. I’ve learnt a lot. When I first came into Melbourne, I hated Melbourne.

IN: Yeah.

S: I was so homesick.

IN: Yeah.

S: And this is global warming or something. Because when I first came, what nearly ten years ago now, a Melbourne winter was a Melbourne winter.

IN: Yes.

S: It was cold, it was windy. Everyday.

IN: We haven’t had it for years.

S: And we haven’t had it years. It was wet, cold, windy. Every single day.

IN: Mmm.

S: I’d just wake up, and I’d be so depressed.

IN: Yeah.

S: I’d think, ‘What am I doing here? What the hell am I doing? I hate this place’. But, um, certainly over the last five years, we haven’t had a true Melbourne winter. But, um, I’ve grown to -

IN: That’s why the people love their footy, see. It keeps their mind off the weather.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

S: Yeah. (laughs) (both laugh)

But, um, when I lived up in the country, and that was Jim. But when we moved down here to Brunswick, that was a great move. And, um, I just love this area.

IN: Yeah. That’s good.

S: Mmm. Brunswick.

IN: Apart from when you go on your holidays overseas. To see your family.

S: (laughs)

IN: You’ve got a good reason for going, haven’t you?

S: Yes. Yeah. Um. When I spoke to Dad, he’s like, ‘You have to get your passport, your papers and all that’. He desperately wants me to get to Canada to see my mother’s mother.

IN: Mmm.

S: My grandmother. And I do. Because she’s the only grandparent I’ve really ever known.

IN: Yeah.

S: No. Because she was in Canada. I mean, the isolation fact as a child - I mean, my Mum and Auntie Susan had a very uneasy relationship. And then, of course, when I was seven they had a big fallout.

IN: Yeah.

S: That was it. That was the end of me seeing my cousin and my Auntie.

IN: Yeah.

S: That was it. That was the end of me seeing my cousin and my Auntie.

IN: Yeah.

S: And, of course, my other Auntie and my Grandma and Granddad lived in Canada.

IN: Yeah.

S: We never went over there. They didn’t come here.

IN: Yeah.

S: I mean, they used to write letters. There was a lot of letter writing going on.

IN: I mean, they used to write letters. There was a lot of letter writing going on.

S: Even that was manufactured on my side by my Mum. Because my Mum would stand over my shoulder as I wrote letters.

IN: To make sure.

IN: To make sure like I didn’t - Yeah. And she never told me their addresses either. She kept the addresses of my Grandma.

IN: But you could find out now?

S: Oh. Yeah. I have now. Like I’m in contact with Grandma. And Auntie Cathy got back in contact with -

IN: Yeah.

S: When Jim was there. It happened quite a few years ago.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

IN: Mmm.

S: My Auntie Cathy got breast cancer. She’s got the fight of her life on her hands. Lost all her hair and everything.

IN: Mmm. Mmm.

S: Undergoing chemo. At the moment. Um. So that’s sad. And, ah, Grandma is in her eighties now, and quite frail and can’t really get out much. And so - Oh. I guess that’s if I go overseas, it’s really to visit.

IN: Yeah.

S: To visit family.

IN: Yeah.


IN: Mmm.

S: And through my Uncle (name) and by marriage, I have family in Lebanon. Um. New Zealand.

IN: Mmm. Yeah.

S: My stepmother and my Dad. Stepmother’s family. And, of course, my Father’s family. In Fiji?

IN: In Fiji?

S: In Fiji.

IN: Yeah.

S: So - Yeah. It’s a virtual -

IN: That’s multicultural in itself.

S: (laughs) Yeah.

IN: Yeah.

S: You know. So that’s, that’s really big.

IN: Yeah.

S: And, um, that will save on accommodation costs.

IN: Yeah. (both laugh)

S: Yeah. Oh. That’s good. That’s terrific. I’m glad about that.

IN: I, um, I think the only thing I was going to ask you for this too was - Remember when you came when Heather was there? We did the applications to get in.

S: Oh God! Yeah.

IN: Did, did you find that helpful or?

S: Yeah. I did. Yeah.
IN: Did you think it was a good idea? They’re changing the course a bit, see. So I just thought it would be interesting, in your opinion, if it’s a good idea we kept on doing that.

S: Yes. I mean, it’s such a lot of work. I couldn’t have done that by myself. I could not.

IN: To get in?

S: Yeah. I mean, that took ages anyway for you to help me.

IN: (laughs)

S: So me by myself -

IN: Yeah.

S: Forget it. I mean, that was really daunting. And I, you know, to this day I really appreciate that.

IN: Yeah.

S: I really, really appreciate that.

IN: Oh. No. Don’t worry. You added another breath of fresh air.

IN: You’re another one like (name). You know, he was right in there with his, you know, his tapes and his Metallica. We had to get Metallica on the Internet.

S: Yeah.

IN: So. No. I reckon it’s good. Do you think that’s like a uni. or TAFE course? Or just a specifically ACE sort of a course? Do you think it would only run in ACE? Or do you think it would go over really well in a TAFE?

S: Um. See in a TAFE you might have a larger number.

IN: Yeah.

S: And it might not work.

IN: Yeah.

S: As the same -

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

S: I think that it works better with just a smaller group of people.

IN: Yeah.

S: And especially if that - In that group of people, the aim is for most of them is to get into higher, other tertiary courses. And if it’s the teacher’s job to help them with all the applications, that’s going to be nearly impossible in a TAFE.
Interview with Ilisapeci (S), Coburg Library, 3rd March, 2004

IN: Yeah.

S: You know.

IN: Although you may get students who’ve got a lot of, um, skills already. You know, what I mean?

S: Yes.

IN: They’ve done it in Year 12. They’ve come across things. Whereas we tend to have people who haven’t done that. Don’t know the system, the behavior or whatever. That’s just the difference I’ve found.

S: No.

IN: Yeah. No. That’s good. Just thought I’d better mention that. Well. Do you think that there’s a place for ACE in the future?

S: Oh. Yes.

IN: Oh. That’s good.

S: For sure. I think, um, it’s really, really important in the community.

IN: Mmm.

S: Women, you know, who are specially, you know, over in a couple of classes I did, there’d be a couple of Muslim girls.

IN: Yeah.

S: You know. And they were quite shy and hesitant.

IN: Yeah.

IN: To talk and -

S: People of all ages. Yes.

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

S: Everything like that. I just think it has to stay around. It’s really, it’s really important.

IN: Oh. Well. Thank you very much for that. I really enjoyed that interview.

S: (laughs)
We get it typed up and we’ll give you a copy. And if you don’t want - If you want anything out of it, that’s your choice. But I personally think you’ve said a lot that was really interesting.

S: Thanks.

IN: Thank you for that.

Could you just add that little comment you made after we turned the tape off, Ilisapeci?

I think Moreland Adult Ed’s been a really big part of my life. It’s just really—the sense of community is fantastic. And that’s something that I really, really like. The drop-in factor, even though I’m not doing a course here anymore, I’m still welcome to come in. Drop in, have a cuppa. Talk to people, annoy people.

No. It just - No. It’s just absolutely fantastic.

Well. That’s great.

I hope it goes on and on for -

Forever.

Forever. Yeah.

Thank you for that. (laughs)

End.
Interview with Jane on the 1st of July

IN: Thank you for taking part in the interview Jane. You know you can stop the interview at any time or refuse to answer a question. And later on when you’ve got a typed up version you can delete anything.

JANE: OK.

IN: Is that OK?

JANE: Yes.

IN: Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? Like where you were born and your family.

JANE: I was born in Coburg in 1946. And then I lived in Brunswick for most of my life. And now I’m back in Coburg. I’m the third of four sisters. My parents were in the rag trade, I suppose you’d say. Mum being a machinist and Dad being a clothing manufacturer.

IN: Good. Yes. So that was sort of a family thing? Were a lot of people in the rag trade?

JANE: Oh. Yes. It seemed to come down through the family quite a lot. Grandparents, grandmother was in the rag trade. And Mum’s sisters.

IN: Good. And you didn’t go into the rag trade yourself?

JANE: No. I didn’t. I don’t think it was ever offered, actually.

IN: As an option.

JANE: No. Looking back now, I’m sort of sorry.

IN: Yeah. Yeah. I can see that. Yeah. And - Yeah. What about siblings? Did you get along all right with your siblings or - ?

JANE: Yes. I always got along very well with my siblings, actually.

IN: That’s good. Good. And your parents?

JANE: Yes. I had a happy childhood.

IN: Yes. That’s nice. They didn’t split up or no domestic - ?

JANE: No. No. They were like the old fashioned sort of family. In that they stayed together, you know, and the family was raised. And that was -

IN: And you had an extended family?

JANE: Yeah. Grandmother lived across the road, and aunts.

IN: Good.

JANE: They all worked for the same, sort of the family business. So saw them very regularly.

IN: And they had input into your growing up? Do you think?

JANE: The aunts did.

IN: To what formed you.
Interview with Jane, 1st July, 2003

JANE: Oh. Very much so, I think. And not so much my 
grandmother, because she died when 
I was still quite youngish. But no. Auntie Jean did. Yeah.

IN: Yeah. So the extended family was -

JANE: Important.

IN: Important. Just aunts? Uncles?

JANE: There was - Well, Uncle Archie. But he was actually a cousin.

IN: Yeah.

JANE: But. Yeah. We called him ‘Uncle’. Yeah. He was good. He was sort of, rather a baby 
sitter for us sometimes.

IN: Yeah.

JANE: Yeah. He was a, very much a laugh.

IN: Yeah. No. That’s good because it sort of extends your family. Doesn’t it?

JANE: Yes.

IN: Oh. No. Well, that was good. You had a good 
family. And you didn’t have health 
issues or poverty issues or anything, as a child?

JANE: No. Oh. Well, I could say I’ve never been hungry, cold or out in the cold or anything 
in my life. I’ve been very fortunate that way. No. When I was a child, I was quite 
healthy. Just the minor ailments like tonsillitis and stuff.

IN: Yeah. Like everybody.

JANE: Yes.

IN: And did you feel - So you feel positive about how your growing up went along or - ?

JANE: For my home life? Yeah. And when I was a child, I quite liked primary school.

IN: You did enjoy it. What about secondary? I was going to ask you next about your 
schooling. So -

JANE: Ah. Well. Primary school I quite enjoyed. I mean, I didn’t have any trouble with it. It 
was just sort of part of life really. Wasn’t it?

IN: Yeah.

JANE: I think perhaps, when I got a bit older I enjoyed it less. But the funny thing is that I can 
still remember when I was in ‘Bubs’. We were lined up at the door. And the teacher, 
someone was talking, and she smacked my leg. And I wasn’t the one talking. Do you 
know, that rankles me to this day?

IN: It’s funny how that happens. And it, you know, has such an influence in a way on the 
way you -

JANE: I don’t know what it says about me. But it still rankles.

IN: No. I think it’s maybe when you haven’t been smacked at home.

JANE: Oh. That’s -

MJC
Interview with Jane, 1st July, 2003

IN: You know. And if you weren’t smacked at home.

JANE: No. Well I was never smacked at home.

IN: You feel assaulted. Didn’t you?

JANE: Well. And I wasn’t guilty. That was what the problem was.

IN: That’s right. Yeah. Yeah. No. That’s really awful.

JANE: And I think in the sixth grade, I had a teacher, Mr Savage. And I used to think Savage by name and savage by nature. And so, he wasn’t exactly conducive to the experience, you know.

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

JANE: Yes.

IN: A lot of people say there was a big change in sixth grade. And maybe it was to get you ready for high school. They seemed to have the most severe teachers. Didn’t they?

JANE: Well, nothing got me ready for high school. As soon as I entered the building, I was a fish out of water. And I hated every minute of it.

IN: Secondary?

JANE: Secondary.

JANE: Secondary.

IN: And did you go to a private or a State school?


IN: OK. Yeah. But it wasn’t learning. Because I know you went on and did tertiary education. It wasn’t like literacy. A lot of people say -

JANE: Oh. No. Apart from maths, which I never -

IN: Disliked. Yeah.

JANE: Well. No. Because I think I disliked it, because I had such poor teachers.

IN: Yeah.

JANE: When I started, the two teachers, they were older men. And they were really severe older men.

IN: Yeah.

JANE: And then, in the second form, we had a maths teacher who didn’t speak English.

IN: Yeah.

JANE: And so how could she -

IN: Explain.

JANE: Communicate it to us. So after that I was just so far behind, I never caught up.

IN: Caught up. Yeah. Yeah. And so, I mean, reading and writing and those things were always fine?
JANE: Oh. No. That was fine.
IN: You came from a reading family?
JANE: Oh. Yes. We always had books at home. And we were read to as children.
IN: Yeah.
JANE: We had books from the library. The travelling library.
IN: Because there weren’t many libraries around then?
JANE: No. And he used to come to the door. Which was -
IN: Well, that’s different.
JANE: Yes.
IN: That’s quite rare. Isn’t it? Around working class areas.
JANE: And Mum used to get her books. And we were all allowed to choose a book. Yeah.
IN: No. That’s good. And you’re from a reading family?
JANE: Yes.
IN: I think that makes a huge impact on literacy, however your teachers pan out. Don’t you?
JANE: I had a good memory. So I didn’t have any trouble sort of doing that sort of work. And I liked exams. I could waffle.
IN: So, do you think it was as much the social aspect of secondary school? The way you had to change classes.
JANE: I didn’t like having a lot of different teachers.
IN: Yeah. You had a good memory. Yeah.
JANE: A good memory. And I know how to write, and flow with the writing. And so -
IN: So, do you think it was as much the social aspect of secondary school? The way you had to change classes.
JANE: I didn’t like having a lot of different teachers.
IN: Yes.
JANE: And I was - I was a fat child. So I didn’t fit in. And I wasn’t any good at sport.
IN: Yeah. Yeah. That’s really shocking, the impact that’s had on a lot of people.
JANE: Yeah. Anyway I was pleased the day I left. Let’s put it that way.
IN: Yeah. Yeah. And when you left school, where did you go on to? Because you could get a job pretty well -
IN: So you’re actually a librarian by trade?
Interview with Jane, 1st July, 2003

240 JANE: Yes. I did, I did the course. Part-time. Well, I was working, and I did it, sort of part-
241 time. And sat for the exams. And I passed those. And then after I went - I was at Kew
242 for four years. And then I was in the Melbourne City Libraries for four years.

244 IN: And you liked working in libraries?
246 JANE: Yes. I did. I liked working, you know, with people.
248 IN: Yes.
250 JANE: On the desk and all the things that you did in the libraries. Of course, they were very
different then.

252 IN: And you've kept up your computer skills anyway. Haven't you?
254 JANE: Oh. Yes.
256 IN: That wouldn't be a problem for you.
258 JANE: Yes.
260 IN: That wouldn't be a problem for you.
262 JANE: Yes.
264 IN: Oh. No. That's good. So actually, your schooling experience was positive, except for
some aspects of secondary school.

266 JANE: Yes.
268 IN: Yeah. Do you think a different school would have been different?
270 JANE: No.
272 IN: No. No. That's interesting. Because a lot of people say things like, you know, 'The
different school would have made a difference'. But -

276 JANE: No.
278 IN: It's pretty much all the high schools are similar. Aren't they?
280 JANE: I think they were. Yes. And the only reason that I kept on, I think. Well, it was
expected to, in our family, to go to the sixth form.

282 IN: Yeah. Yeah.
284 JANE: With - Rather having the option. That's what I meant about going into the family
business.

286 IN: Yeah.
288 JANE: Being a machinist.
290 IN: You'd follow on.
292 JANE: It probably would have suited me quite well, actually.
294 IN: Yeah.
296 JANE: But I didn't get that choice. And I never thought about it at the time. I'm thinking
about it now, but I didn't think about it at the time.
Interview with Jane, 1st July, 2003

IN: At the time. Well, they’ve closed nearly all the clothing factories around here remember.

JANE: Yeah.

IN: Sort of with their free trade and everything. So you might have been out of a job anyway. There’s something creative about it. And I think, you know, you’ve kept that in your life. That creative -

JANE: Oh. Yes. I do sewing, all those sorts of creative things. Knitting.

IN: And that’s all back to your family influence, as much as anything.

JANE: Oh. Yes. Because my grandmother did, the aunts did, Mum did.

IN: Yes.

JANE: Sisters did. So you know, it just carried on that way.

IN: Yeah. And in terms of, you know, yourself and your life, is there anything you think has, you know, has made it easier for you to come to ACE, than maybe go to a TAFE or anything like that? In terms of events.

JANE: Well. The events in my - I left work after four years because I developed - I had my appendix out.

IN: Right.

JANE: And that sort of hung on. Well, eventually for about two years, actually. So after about six months of that, I gave it up. Hoping it would go away.

IN: Oh. Right. Yeah.

JANE: And it did eventually, but I was at home. So I ended up being at home for twenty odd years.

IN: And you’d lost a lot of weight. Hadn’t you? Do you think that made a difference?

JANE: Yes. I did.

IN: From when you were big?

JANE: So I didn’t do that - Well, until I was - I sort of went up and down a bit as most dieters do. So when I was in my thirties, I went to Weight Watchers. And over nine months, I lost a lot of weight.

IN: Yes. Which you’ve kept off pretty much.

JANE: Mainly.

IN: Hard work. Yeah.

JANE: Yeah.

IN: So that’s health and -
Interview with Jane, 1st July, 2003

JANE: Self-image.

IN: Yeah. That’s interesting. Self-image. And the health thing, has that stayed away? Or does it come back?

JANE: No. It comes back periodically.

IN: So it’s like a cycle?

JANE: Yes.

IN: Yes. Do you think it’s restricted what you’ve done?

JANE: Yes.

IN: You do. You would have done something else?

JANE: Always a fear of it coming back.


JANE: Yes.

IN: That’s good. Anything else about growing up? Or negative, or anything there we can delve into?

JANE: I don’t think so.

IN: No. That’s fine. Well, tell me about ACE. Now how or when did you hear about ACE? You know I mean Adult Community Education?

JANE: Yes. Well, I first hear about ACE, was my sister got involved with it. And, well actually, she worked there for an organization. So that was really where I sort of knew about it.

IN: Yeah.

JANE: And then eventually I went to one of the - Well, it was a little class for ladies who were accessing the Internet, actually. It wasn’t exactly a class, it was -

IN: An access group.

JANE: Yes. An access group. And that was very good. I liked that.

IN: Yeah. And you mean, you didn’t mind that it wasn’t accredited or anything. That it really was just access.

JANE: No. That was what I wanted.

IN: Yes.

JANE: I’m sort of very anti, with my high school experience. I was - I don’t like that formal education.

IN: No. But you went back and you’ve done a Cert. II RMIT on-line.

JANE: Which was in Moreland High, my old high school.

IN: Oh. That one.
Interview with Jane, 1st July, 2003

JANE: Which didn’t add to the -

IN: That was the Kangan one. You went to Kangan?

JANE: Yeah. That was the Kangan one.

IN: Yes.

JANE: The teacher was very good. I’ve got nothing to say about the teacher. But I didn’t like the atmosphere.

IN: It was too much like being back at school?

JANE: Yes.

IN: Yes.

JANE: And having an exam sort of at the end. Not like - about a sixteen year old again.

IN: Yeah. Well you did the RMIT on-line as well after that. Didn’t you? You did the Certificate IV in Business or one of those.

JANE: Yes. Yes.

IN: So would you say that’s the difference between ACE and TAFE? Is that thing you’ve described?

JANE: Yes. Yes. There’s the informality of it. And a more relaxed atmosphere. And not so much pressure on you.

IN: But do you feel comfortable that the outcomes are the same? That you learnt the same thing you would have learnt in the TAFE?

JANE: Yes. Yes. Because there were assignments and assessment tasks.

JANE: Except that you go at your own pace. And there wasn’t the pressure on you. I mean, to keep up. Well, I didn’t actually as it turned out, I didn’t have any trouble doing it.

IN: No.

JANE: But I didn’t feel pressured. And I didn’t feel bad about it.

IN: So would you say that’s the difference between ACE and TAFE? Is that thing you’ve described?

JANE: Yes. Yes. There’s the informality of it. And a more relaxed atmosphere. And not so much pressure on you.

IN: But do you feel comfortable that the outcomes are the same? That you learnt the same thing you would have learnt in the TAFE?

JANE: Oh. Yes.

IN: Because that’s an RMIT course, that one. You sort of know that it’s at that level.

JANE: Yes. Yes.

IN: But sometimes people think ACE is just warm and fuzzy, and you’re not really getting outcomes.

JANE: Oh. No. No. Getting a piece of paper at the end, you mean?
Interview with Jane, 1st July, 2003

IN: Yeah. Because there’s a lot of that goes on. Would you have described ACE when you first became involved - How would you have described it? In those terms probably.

JANE: Very informal, very friendly. Yeah. Social, community sort of place.

IN: Oh. Community. Yes. That’s a good word, isn’t it? And social. So it was different to other sorts of schooling you’d been involved in.

JANE: Yes. Very much so.

IN: And if I asked you, because you’re still involved in ACE as a volunteer. Aren’t you?

JANE: Yes.

IN: How would you describe it now? Do you think you would - What differences would you see if any?

JANE: I get - I get the feeling that it’s more formal now. Rather than - It used to be that the people involved were the most important thing. Now I get the feeling that the outcomes are the most important thing. I don’t know if that’s right. But I just get the feeling.

IN: Yes.

JANE: I think it’s coming from bureaucracy. I don’t think it’s necessarily from the people who are, sort of at the coal face, running it.

IN: No. I want your opinion on it. Yes.

JANE: And I think it’s coming from bureaucracy. I don’t think it’s necessarily from the people who are, sort of at the coal face, running it.

IN: Yes.

JANE: But it’s a feeling I get.

IN: So there’s pressure from bureaucracies and the government?

JANE: Yes. Yes. To justify your money and that sort of thing.

IN: Your money. Yes. Yes.

JANE: And that social, community sort of aspect to it, is not as important as it was.

IN: Yes.

JANE: Which is a shame.

IN: Yeah. A lot of people feel that. Do you think that underneath that there is a change to what they want to achieve? You know, like their core values if you like. The aim being to support people who wouldn’t, couldn’t go to other forms of education. Do you think that that’s changed? Or do you think there’s still a commitment to it?

JANE: I don’t think they’re as committed to it now.

IN: Yes.

JANE: I think they’re more committed to getting, well you might say; the runs on the board.

IN: Yes.

JANE: You know?

IN: Because you don’t get the money if you don’t?
Interview with Jane, 1st July, 2003

JANE: No. If you don’t have the results, you don’t get the money. Rather than helping people being the sort of end or the outcome that you wanted. Now the outcome is to get people with sort of a qualification or something.

IN: Yeah. Yeah. And - Oh. You’ve already described ACE. So you - I’ve got, ‘How would you describe ACE’. But you have sort of described that already so I won’t ask you to go over that. And the difference you’ve also described. So that’s really good. I won’t have to go over them. What do you actually like about ACE? Now you can, I mean, you can see it as you’re working in it. I know you’ve worked over the years. Because it’s been how many years, you’ve been involved? About? It must be about.

JANE: Oh. Over. It must be about ten. Is it?

IN: I would say. Yes.

JANE: Yes.

IN: And coming back as a volunteer.

JANE: Yes.

IN: And you were on the committee. But I’ll come up to that in a minute. So don’t worry. Is there anything you like about it?

JANE: I like that informal atmosphere particularly. And the fact that it’s local. You can just - You don’t have to go far to go there.

IN: So that’s geographic. Yeah.

JANE: Yeah. Yes. And that it’s not terribly expensive.

IN: Oh. Yeah. No. That’s a huge issue for people. Isn’t it?

JANE: Yes.

IN: No. That’s good. OK. What don’t you like? Now you can just throw anything in here.

JANE: I don’t like the way it’s moving away from being people orientated.

IN: Yeah.

JANE: I don’t like the way it’s moving away from being people orientated.

AT: And more outcomes orientated. I don’t like all the paperwork. That’s -

IN: You’ve seen that, because you do some of our filing.

JANE: Yes. And it’s just an avalanche of paperwork.

IN: Yes.

JANE: And so much repetition of the paperwork. And such a waste of time with bureaucratic stuff sometimes. I understand that there has to be a certain amount.

IN: Yes.
Interview with Jane, 1st July, 2003

JANE: And, you know, all these audits and things that keep coming up. And they just take the time.

IN: Yes. Weeks. And just so repetitious.

JANE: Yes.

IN: Do you think ACE will be around in the future? Can you see a need for it?

JANE: I can definitely see a need for it. Particularly if it was for the people who miss out in other ways. You know, like people who’ve fallen through the cracks. Or have had some life experience that’s knocked them backwards, you know.

IN: Yes.

JANE: Whatever it is. Be it health, be it family breakups. Be it, you know, drug problems or whatever.

IN: Or whatever.

JANE: And if they’re not comfortable with going to a TAFE. And don’t get the support or anything. There should - There must be a place.

IN: Yeah. There aren’t many places, you know.

JANE: No. I know. I also volunteer at the Community Information Centre. And we see a lot of people there that just - I mean, there’s no other place they could go to really, that could benefit them. Than an ACE organization.

IN: Give them some support. Locally.

JANE: Yeah. Locally. And so that’s why I see that there’s definitely going to be a need for it in the future.

IN: Good. Have you got any ideas about what they could be doing to make it better? In ACE.

JANE: They could advertise it more.

IN: Yes.

JANE: Because I don’t think a lot of people know it’s there. Or. Yes. What else? I can’t think of -

IN: Yep. If anything pops into your head. That’s fine.

JANE: I’ve got some other questions here that sort of relate to different little groups. Because if you look, you’ll see that the end ones are about Learn Links, which only people who’ve done RMIT know about. And Diploma of Further Ed. I might just cross those off. And ask you now when you were a student. You have studied in ACE. Haven’t you?

JANE: Yes.

IN: So you’ve done - You mentioned your Internet computers.

JANE: Internet Access computers thing.

IN: Women’s group.

JANE: Women’s group. Yes. And then I went to Kangan for the computer thing. And then I did Certificate II in Business.
Interview with Jane, 1st July, 2003

659 IN: But you’re actually a qualified librarian, who’s come back after being a carer for many years?

660 JANE: Yes.

661 IN: Yeah. So. Yeah. Because there is a thing that, you know, ACE only deals with people who couldn’t or wouldn’t go to school. Or whatever the situation was. But in actual fact, we’re finding a lot of people are coming back for other reasons.

662 JANE: That’s what I mean. There has been some break for some reason in their career or their life. Or they need somewhere to sort of catch up.

663 IN: That’s a good way to put it ‘a break’. Yeah. It’s a good word to use. Isn’t it? Yeah. So you’ve already answered some of these questions. Like about the courses being different. That thing with the people, and now it’s more about the piece of paper.

664 JANE: Yeah.

665 IN: Accreditation or outcomes.

666 JANE: That’s right.

667 IN: Yeah.

668 JANE: I mean everyone probably likes to get a piece of paper. But they don’t like to be pressured into it. You know? And to feel that’s just the outcome.

669 IN: Yeah. I think you’ll find a lot of the staff feel exactly the same.

670 JANE: As there used to be. The buildings have got more sophisticated. Well, I don’t mean bigger or anything. But the premises sort of, you have to expand. Well, you need the space to store all your paperwork. Don’t you?

671 IN: Yeah. Definitely.

672 JANE: To ACE. Well, there’s not as many volunteers. I don’t think.

673 IN: That is true.

674 JANE: As is. What else?

675 IN: No. That’s good. And you’re actually a volunteer. Now, you were on the committee for a while. I know it’s difficult, because committee meetings are in the evening.

676 JANE: Yes.

677 IN: And it’s really quite difficult for people with us having evenings. But we can only get some people of an evening. But I know you’ve done that. And I know you’re doing volunteer work at the moment.

678 JANE: Yes.

679 IN: And you’ve been doing library archives for us.
JANE: That's right.

IN: And all the filing. You're catching up with years of filing, and boxing, and doing all that. So, how many years do you think you've been doing volunteer and committee type work? About?

JANE: Oh. Three?

IN: Three years. Yep. What made you get involved in that, as distinct from, you know, your studies and things.

JANE: Oh. Well. Being a carer for years, I've been unemployed. And being of a certain age, it's difficult to get employment. So actually at the beginning when I stated volunteering, like at the Community Information Centre, it was really to get something for a CV. You know?

IN: Yeah.

JANE: Which, I suppose, sounds a bit selfish. But it's a bit of a quid pro quo.

IN: No. No. No. That should work with volunteers, you know. You can't expect people to do things for nothing. You know, not for money, but for other things. I think it's an exchange quite often.

JANE: Yes. Well, that was at the beginning. But I keep on with it. I quite enjoy it actually.

IN: And there is the Centrelink factor. Isn't there?

JANE: Oh. Indeed.

IN: The Centrelink factor. Because they want you to do, how many hours?

JANE: Thirty-two hours a fortnight.

IN: Which is quite a lot, if you're doing other things. You know, if you had somebody sick at home or anything. You know, it is difficult. With little kids or -

JANE: Yeah. I know. Oh. Well. If you're sick yourself as well.

IN: That's right. And if you're not well. There's no real outcome, unless you're 90% disabled or something.

JANE: That's right.

IN: If you can't do a job, bad luck. And I've got here 'What type of activities?'. But I know that you've been on the committee. You've done our archiving. I think you did a bit of helping somebody too, on a computer. Wasn't it?

JANE: Oh. Yes. I helped the ladies look up their family tree. Yes. And that sort of thing.

IN: So there's genealogy.

JANE: Yes. Genealogy.

IN: That's your old library skills.
Interview with Jane, 1st July, 2003

JANE: Yes. And my hobby.

IN: Yeah. Yeah. Because I remember one of the students saying how you’d gone to the newspaper room. And showed her how to use that.

JANE: Yes.

IN: You forget these things are volunteer work.

JANE: And to the Latter Day Saints. I took her as well, and showed her where it was, and how to get on there. I’ve done that twice, actually.

IN: Yeah. And I know because I remember her telling me how thrilled she was by it. Because she didn’t have those research skills. People have the interest, but they don’t know where to go with it. Do they?

JANE: No.

IN: They just think it’s the local library. And that’s it.

JANE: Yes. They do assume that you know how to look things up, when you get to the library.

IN: Yes. Yes.

JANE: And I perhaps, with my background, don’t realize how confused other people get.

IN: Going to the State Library?

JANE: Yes.

IN: Well, I’ve often had to ask in libraries.

JANE: Yes. Because I’ve mentioned it to people and they –

IN: They don’t know.

JANE: They feel as if, ‘Oh. No. I couldn’t go in there. It’s special’. You know?

IN: Yeah.


IN: It’s the State Library.

JANE: Yeah.

IN: But it is. It’s actually set up in a very intimidating manner. I sort of have often wondered if we shouldn’t take students in there and do that little excursion.

JANE: Give them a tour. Yeah.

IN: Just chatty and then have a coffee. And have a look at it. And, ‘Yes’. You’re allowed in.

JANE: Show where things are. And how you get your locker. And that sort of thing.

IN: And. Yeah. It’s very intimidating and going through. And you bag. Is your bag the right size? You know, all those little processes.

JANE: Yeah. All the little rules that you take for granted yourself.
Interview with Jane, 1st July, 2003

IN: And the fact that you can just go and look.

JANE: Yes. You can just -

IN: Yeah. Not to mention the photocopier. Because I’m too scared to use the photocopier in there.

JANE: Yes.

IN: So I can imagine how students who don’t read and write very well, would never go near the photocopier.

JANE: Well. You’d better go with me, because I photocopy all the time. I’ll give you a lesson.

IN: But I mean, that’s just the degree of, you know, of -

JANE: Oh. I understand. Yes. Yes. You have to go and you have to get a card.

IN: Yeah.

JANE: Put your coins in to get the card. Then you have to take the card back to the machine. You have to swipe the card, and you have to push the button on the computer. And -

IN: Yes. Well, I think they’d be surprised at the number of tertiary students who finish a degree without using the libraries.

JANE: You have to be a desperate genealogist who will learn these things, out of sheer desperation.

IN: So that’s another aspect maybe of volunteering work that could be thought about. Just asking people, setting up a little group like that. Yeah. So. OK. And there’s less volunteers you say now, than years ago?

JANE: Yes. I think so. I think that government thing sort of put people off. If you know, where volunteers were, they said they were liable for things. And people got very nervous.

IN: Yeah. That’s the same with committees. Because people think if anything goes wrong and there’s an OH&S thing, the committee is actually the legal employer. And they get very frightened.

JANE: Well, I don’t think they made that very clear at the time. You know, when it was a sort of a big publicity about it.

IN: Yeah. In fact, they’re always covered by insurance.

JANE: I know. But they’re still nervous.

IN: Yeah. That’s the same with committees. Because people think if anything goes wrong and there’s an OH&S thing, the committee is actually the legal employer. And they get very frightened.

JANE: Well, I don’t think they made that very clear at the time. You know, when it was a sort of a big publicity about it.

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

JANE: People just got frightened.

IN: And I’ve handed the committee all the stuff on the fact that they’re covered by director’s insurance. And I must admit, some of them that have been on the committee for years, and we’ve discussed it. But they haven’t taken it on board.

JANE: No.

IN: They say, ‘I didn’t realize we’re covered’. You know? So I think there’s a lot of fear with all these bureaucratic things, at all levels.
JANE: And then, I suppose, a lot of people, they’re looking for work. If you’re at Centrelink, they’ve got duties and things that they have to do. And then if they’re older, perhaps that’s one of the reasons they’ve been frightened off. Perhaps.

IN: Yeah. Definitely. What do you think makes people become volunteers? In ACE. Well, you’ve mentioned Centrelink.

JANE: Well, of course, as well there’s the Centrelink. And for their own benefit for helping with their CV. But there’s also people who’ve stopped working, who want something to do. To put something back, perhaps.

IN: Yeah.

JANE: To help people and feel that they’ve got some skills.

IN: Yeah. That’s true.

JANE: And something that will keep them occupied. Their minds still active.

IN: Yeah. And when you can’t maybe do something as physical, there’s a mental -

JANE: Yeah. And still feel useful.

IN: Yeah. Yeah. That’s an interesting word. The useful thing. Yeah. You’ve said some good words. Because that thing on the “break” in your life, you know. That’s really excellent. That and the fact that people do like to feel useful.

JANE: Well, they do.

IN: Within their capacity.

JANE: That’s right.

IN: Yeah. Not so that they’re pushed to be something they’re not.

JANE: No. No.

IN: But they’ve got something to offer. Yeah. No. That’s really good. Thank you for that. And the only other thing I was going to ask you, a little bit about your IT. Do you think that’s different now to when you started. You did a computer course.

JANE: Oh. Well. That was one of the differences I meant to mention about what ACE is now, to what it was before. Is the amount of IT.

IN: Yeah.

JANE: You know. Because it’s now pretty well dominated by IT. Isn’t it? I mean, you’ve got to have computer skills.
Interview with Jane, 1st July, 2003

958 JANE: And I think that’s good, to introduce people to it. But you don’t necessarily want to have a qualification from it. You want to know how to do it.

960 IN: Yeah.

962 JANE: And everyone needs to know how to do it. I think. These days.

964 IN: Because you’re locked out.

966 JANE: Yes. Well. Even in banking. Or paying your bills. Or, you know, just looking up anything.

968 IN: So it’s a skill sort of now.

970 JANE: Yes. It is now. And, you know, young kids, if they don’t have a computer for their school. They’re just out of it. Aren’t they?

972 IN: Yeah. If they don’t have a computer to do their homework or look things up off Google. I feel really sorry for high school kids.

974 JANE: That’s right.

976 IN: And they say, ‘Use the library’. But if you’re a long way from the library, or you parents can’t necessarily get you there.

978 JANE: And, you know, for people who are housebound or anything. I can see that playing on the Internet -

980 IN: Yeah.

982 JANE: It’s just wonderful. I mean, if they can afford it for a start.

984 IN: I’ve had a couple of young men particularly, who’ve done that. And one recovering from cancer.

986 JANE: Yes.

988 IN: And he taught himself to network. He built a computer. He did everything. Yeah. So that’s an aspect that we don’t always see. We just see the nuisance sides at times.

990 JANE: Yeah. Yeah. So it’s much more now? Than -

992 IN: Oh. Much more.

994 JANE: Oh. Do you think there’s more IT in TAFEs.

996 JANE: I think there’s more IT everywhere.

998 IN: Oh. Yes. So it’s just universal.

JANE: Absolutely.

1000 IN: Yeah.

1002 JANE: I mean even public libraries are getting rid of their Janet books now. Because you can look up stuff on the Internet, I mean.

1004 IN: Yeah. And from the library point-of-view, that’s interesting. Because you’re saying that as a librarian.
Interview with Jane, 1st July, 2003

JANE: Yes. But then I’m an old-fashioned librarian. I love my books.

IN: Yeah. I think a lot of people do. But they see them as being two different things.

JANE: Yes.

IN: Having a good read is different to using the computer.

JANE: Oh. Well, it’s very convenient to look up stuff on the Internet.

IN: Yeah. Google.

JANE: Google it up. Google it up. Although I did see that there were problems, they were talking about, with a lot of students these days, who are just copy and pasting straight into their homework.

IN: Exactly.

JANE: Stuff off the Internet.

IN: There’s a site called ‘cheat’s site’ or something.

JANE: Yes.

IN: And you just pay to contribute. Then you just download all your essays.

JANE: That’s right.

IN: So they’re going to have to find a different way of dealing. Aren’t they?

JANE: So if you’re really savvy about it, you can just learn nothing really. Whereas in the old days, you actually had to read a bit of the book. Didn’t you?

IN: Although funnily enough, I’d say that’s what is different about ACE. Adults come in because they want to come in to learn.

JANE: That is true. They’re there because they want to be there. They’re not there because they have to be.

IN: And not because they want to cheat the system.

JANE: No. No.

IN: Yeah. No. That’s good. Oh. Well, thank you for that. And I think you’ve covered everything very nicely for me there. Yep. Thank you for participating. And you know this will be typed up, and you get a copy. And you can just wipe out anything you’re not happy with or-

JANE: That’s fine.

IN: If you decide you don’t want me to quote you. And remember, you won’t be referred to as your own name. OK.

JANE: That’s OK.

IN: Thank you very much.
Interview with Jane, 1st July, 2003

IN: Thank you for letting me get a few more words from you, Jane. But I thought we’d finished. But you made a comment at the end of the tape that I thought was worth putting in. So would you mind telling me again how you commented on - In your talk you said, your sister. But then after the tape turned off, you mentioned all the other members of the family who are in ACE. So would you mind just running me through that again?

JANE: Oh. Well. I was just saying that so many members of the family are involved in ACE. Well, there’s my sister who works for ACE. And her husband also has a part-time job for ACE. And her two children. And the husband of one of the daughters. And another two nieces are also involved in ACE.

IN: Yes.

JANE: So the extended family. Like the mother-in-law of one of the -

IN: Girlfriends.

JANE: So.

IN: You said that. Yeah. And you think - Do you think that’s part of ACE then?

JANE: I do. I think - Well, it’s a word-of-mouth thing as well.

IN: Yeah.

JANE: And - Yes.

IN: About that family participation. Yes.

JANE: People say, ‘I’m doing this’. And they say, ‘Oh. Where are you going? And ‘I could like to do that’.

IN: Yeah.

JANE: Or, you know. I think, you know, that’s good.

IN: So family is a definite other. That’s interesting.

JANE: And friends. I mean, friends and family, by word-of -

IN: Plus family.

JANE: Mouth. That’s what I mean about them needing more advertising. I think.

IN: Yeah. Yeah. More for the promotional aspect.

JANE: Because once people know, the people appreciate it. And a lot of people don’t know.

IN: Yeah. No. That’s good. Well, look. Thank you for that. And I think that’s a really important point. So I wanted you to get that on.
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. If you would like to stop the interview at any time, just press the button or signal. You can ask me questions at any time or choose not to reply. You can change your mind at any time about your answers being used, and I will return the tape to you. The interview will be written out for you to check and I will remove anything you choose. Remember when I say ‘ACE’ I mean adult community education places (like Moreland Adult Ed).

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself, like where you were born and about your family?

I was born in the Queen Vic hospital and lived in East Brunswick—right down near the creek. My Dad worked in the brick company and Mum sewed in a big factory nearby—Holeproof (or was it Beaumond?) with the aunts. I had one older brother who use to bully me a bit, but now I can see why as he was picked on a lot at school. I had a little brother who died when I was young, about 8. My grandmother lived with us and she was terrific especially as Mum fell apart when Rog died. Mum had what we used to call nerves and died when I was 15. Dad used to drown his sorrows on the way home every night. Unless he’d been drinking he was a hard worker and sang a lot, ‘I’ll take you home again Kathleen’ type of thing. We used to go watch East Brunswick play footy with Dad but Des and I always had to leave him at the pub and walk home with fish for tea again. Being Micks we always had fish Fridays in those days too so I guess it was a fairly typical, poorer kind of working class family.

- What do you think helped make you the person you are now? (things like your personality or experiences)

Family, family, family—although being Catholic was pretty heavy in those days so we were always scared of committing sins of all kind. I guess I was always low on confidence but family stuff made it worse. Money was too short for lots of treats but we always had nice Christmases with presents and the aunts gave me little treats.

- How did you feel growing up?

Sad mostly. Mum died of cancer. She had a lump and told the doctor twice but he told her it was just her nerves so she eventually went to another doctor but it was too late by then. Gran said you could feel it like a golf ball near her hip. You would sue the doctor these days. I always felt different to other kids at school because Mum was sick and Gran came to pick us up from school. The others always seemed to have these glam mums with permed hair. I don’t think they ever got over Rog dying, maybe Des and me too. Gran was the brick that held us together, but she and Dad were always going hammer and tongs. Des and I had some real fights with her when we were older too because she thought we should stay home and not go out like he others. I guess she worried.

2. Can you describe your early years of school? (secondary? tertiary?)
Like primary, hated high. I went to the Catholic Primary in Nicholson Street (E Bruns) and the nuns weren’t too bad although they hated Gran who was a proddy and used to laugh at them. Dad made us go but I always wanted to go to the state. High school was rotten—I went to Mercy. I hated the teachers, the girls were stuck-up and my uniforms and books were second hand. I didn’t have any best clothes like the other kids and had to wear my uniform to church too. I was a dud at sport which was pointed out repeatedly so I left at 15 and got a job in the factory, but changed my mind when I was 18 so I went to night school and did my matric (year 12 or whatever it is now) and got a job in the post office where I worked until 30. At 30 I applied to do nursing and went to the Alfred where I finished and that’s how I got to be a Sister.

- How would you describe your feelings about your schooling years?

Very negative. I had a horrible experience where one of the helpers (not a priest) kept touching my boobs and I never knew how to stop him. I was only 13 and a big girl too. I tried to tell the nuns but they said I was a nasty dirty-minded girl and they told Dad to give me a hiding, but he didn’t. When I told Gran she went up there and sorted the bloke out in front of everyone. We were all too humiliated to go back but now I really admire her.

Maybe you forget but primary level everyone seems kind. High school was one long agony even though I knew underneath I could learn and I loved reading. It was worse for Des who got belted, the cuts they called it, every day and he left as soon as Dad got him an apprenticeship.

3. Where or how did you find out about ACE?

Saw an ad in the local paper asking for volunteers. I was waiting to start nursing and had a few months off so thought I’d try something different. (That’s the night we met at vol training! Remember—This is Julie and she works for the Post Office...) That was in 1987 and there were about 10 of us doing the training with another 30 or so at functions. I think we were all Aussies too.

Why did you get involved in ACE?

I had some free time and felt sorry for people who couldn’t read well, like Des, even though he got to be a good reader once he practiced every night reading a book on golf over and over. I guess I wanted to help other people.

4. How would you have described ACE when you first became involved?

It was like joining a little club or family. We spent hours learning how to tutor, then all sat around swapping stories and talking about families—always with food and snacks. One older woman used to bring in cream sponges and home made yoyos. The volunteers were nearly all old and I felt quite a baby at 30, but I always got on well with oldies because of Gran. They were more like the olds who run op shops. The students were all either Aussies or maybe had Italian parents but went to school here. They always had really low self esteem and that was the first thing we had to...
tackle. It was a homey sort of place where we felt valuable but there was quite a big divide between volunteers and students based on literacy.

We met in the library in pairs matched by the part-time co-ordinator, Sue. There were only a couple of books to use as texts so we used to make things up like ‘me’ books, and flash cards. It was pretty amateurish I suppose but people did learn to read and write and we had great social nights.

- Was it the same or different to other types of schooling?

Totally different. Not like any kind of school I ever went to, and I have been to a few having gone back to study at night school, in hospitals and at a TAFE too. I think the big difference was always that personal approach. Everyone was seen a valuable human being and literacy was necessary but didn’t define you by either its existence or lack of skills.

5. How would you describe it now?

Now I’m involved in another ACE up here in Albury where I’m on the committee. Differences? Where do I start! I think there’s a huge emphasis on business now. What with audits, insurances, business plans, strategic planning, OH & S, risk management it’s just like being at work. ACE people are doing their best and just waiting for the sky to fall—either financially or through audits or being sued. Big classes, no money for lower levels, pressure from the local office, governments making ridiculous rules about who can and can’t attend—it’s gone crazy.

6. Do you see any differences between ACE when you started and now?

Huge. As always, the little guy is being trampled down by government agencies giving less and crying more, more, more. Everyone at our ACE centre is too busy filling out forms, pushing people to do online surveys and trying to upgrade qualifications to the newest level to have time to do what they do so well, and that’s create viable, supportive learning communities on a shoe-string.

7. If yes, what are they?

- Please tell me as many as you can think of.

Mountains of paperwork. Less time for volunteers. Less money for salaries although people are working huge hours. Funding cuts. Loss of the community/family atmosphere. Burnt out workers. Poor and out-dated equipment, especially computers. No support from the next level up. Accredited, accredited, accredited (that’s all they talk about now).

- Would you say it is better or worse?

Much worse because of the pressure on everyone.

- How do you mean? Or why?

Comment [m1602]: homey place
Comment [m1603]: amateurish
Comment [m1604]: social
Comment [m1605]: not like school
Comment [m1606]: personal approach
Comment [m1607]: valuable
Comment [m1608]: committee
Comment [m1609]: Huge emphasis on business
Comment [m1610]: Audits etc
Comment [m1611]: Big classes etc
Comment [m1612]: Changes Little guy trampled
Comment [m1613]: Forms, surveys, upgrades
Comment [m1614]: Viable
Comment [m1615]: Community
Comment [m1616]: Whole list
Comment [m1617]: pressure
Jules Interview  June, 2004

The people at the next levels up don’t seem to realise it’s a full time job just teaching and supporting the adult students we get. Just because they can sit in offices and do paperwork and go to meetings, they think ACE staff do the same. Instead of that, co-ordinators are mopping up tears, supporting teachers, ordering books, even cleaning toilets if necessary while some bureaucrat is sitting at the other end of the phone wanting data for research. Every meeting we have, that’s the sort of think the staff members say. Big organisations want ACE people to do projects for a couple of hours ‘backfill’, with no staff member to fill in at all, and phone messages are mounting, statistics not done and volunteers needing someone to advise them.

8. How would you describe a TAFE to someone new to adult education?
A great place to get a trade or a job qualification—big buildings, big classes but some great staff.

9. And how would you describe ACE?
A great place to get a lot of support along with a qualification—or to have somewhere to go to get you back on the track if you’ve fallen in a heap for some reason.

It was different in the old days as we had problems establishing and holding on to even the classrooms. For years we were told to keep our position quiet—especially from the council—as they would have a problem with only one organization getting free space, so we crept around for years too scared to advertise—but people came anyway as they told each other about us. We had enormous problems with the position because new students had to find their way to where we were—hidden upstairs and only able to go through the librarian’s room—and some of them were very crabby years ago.

We had to use the staff toilets—which some of them hated. Our MIDs [students with mild intellectual disabilities] once opened the fire exit by mistake and they often splashed on the toilet seats.

There was a real hooah the time one guy ate a pasty and wheeled a bike in through the library. He couldn’t even read or write his name so how could he read their signs?

10. What do you think makes them similar or different?
I think there are some great teachers in TAFE and good courses but the bigger they get, the more impersonal the whole experience becomes. At ACE it’s like going to a family atmosphere where people are interested in you, even if they are busy. People give you an unbelievable amount of personal and educational support.

I remember one literacy teacher going over the council to get the head lice treatment for a father who was in despair because he had 4 little girls with nits.
We had a woman turn up at Coburg years ago with bruises all over her throat so the co-ordinator took her up to the Health Centre and sat with her and a social worker while they worked out strategies. Another time a girl got mugged in Coles carpark and the co-ordinator went to the police and court with her as she didn’t have a mother. Then there was that lovely young guy who used to need a personal witness in the court when he’d been drinking and teachers would take him and give evidence because he had a literacy problem and his father had beaten him for years. He later committed suicide but that support must have kept him going for some extra years.

11. What do you like about ACE?
The support and that sense of equality. The way everyone adjusts to what could be a potential problem, like some books we used had photographs of people with intellectual disabilities which upset students who had spent years trying to convince friends and relatives they had literacy problems and not intellectual disabilities. MIDs enjoyed seeing people with their own problems as learners. With hardly any money, this often meant stretching the money to cover two sets of materials or having to be really inventive. So we worked through it.

12. What don’t you like?
The dwindling money is a dreadful problem for all centres. We hear all of the rhetoric about how great ACE is—but then they reduce the funding by 3% every year compounding and that doesn’t include the CPI so it’s really 6%. They want everyone to be up to speed on health and safety without any money.

13. Can you see a need for ACE in the future?
Definitely. But governments need to bite the bullet and acknowledge the real costs of running them. If people are in ACE they aren’t out robbing banks, or slashing their wrists or at the pokies.

14. Do you have any ideas on what ACE could be doing to become better?
Promote itself and stop being so humble. Thousands of people depend on it for learning and for jobs but nobody’s even heard of it. It needs to promote itself in academic terms. Never met anyone in a Uni or TAFE yet who believes an ACE organisation can be a bona fide RTO.

15. For how long have you done volunteer/committee work in ACE?
With a break in the middle, for about 18 years.
16. Why did you get involved?
To help people because I was between jobs

17. What kind of activities have you done?
Tutored in reading & writing, organising activities, committee meetings, helping to write a business plan and doing an
OH and S policy doc—as well as organising the first aid and emergency equipment

18. Do you think ACE has changed for volunteers since you started? (If YES or NO)
Very much. Now they expect us all to be business savvy instead of people wanting to socialise and help.

   • In what way/s?
We have to submit a resume and be interviewed and have police checks—which is fair enough when there’s childcare.
It’s all become very professional but I think they’ve thrown the baby out with the bathwater as people who just want to
help are being lost because they are intimidated

19. Why do you think other people come to ACE as volunteers?
To get work experience is a big part of it these days, that’s why they are getting younger and younger. They don’t have
as many people or workplace skills as the oldies used to have so they can be a lot of hard work.

   • Do you think they get what they want/need from volunteering?
There’s an old saying—Volunteers are for free but not for nothing—and that’s very true as people have always done it
for something—even if only to feel good about themselves or as a Christian charity. Now they want experience and it
can be exhausting teaching them—for ‘free’.

(Wasn’t paid ever)

IT

20. Can you describe what IT was available when you started in ACE?
None

   • People, Courses, Equipment?

21. How would you describe the IT now?
All students need to be taught IT and all staff need to keep up too. The cost of trying to keep up is huge but the
government gives ACE centres enough cash to buy one PC a year!

22. What do you think are the main differences (between then and now)?
Money/costs. IT is essential
23. What would you say are the main differences between the IT available in mainstream education and ACE?

A joke.

24. Has this changed at all since you have been involved?

No ACE is always the poor relation.

Email me if I can help with anything or you want more detail. Did my best!

Jules
Interview with Julie  12th May 2004

IN: Interview with Julie the 12th of May

Julie, you know you can stop this interview at any point and if you’re not happy about answering any questions. Just indicate and we won’t go ahead.

JULIE: OK.

IN: And afterwards you’ll be given a copy and you can wipe out anything you didn’t want to say.

JULIE: OK.

IN: OK. If you’ve got any questions you just ask me.

JULIE: Okey doke.

IN: OK. Can you tell me a bit about yourself? Like where you were born and about your family?

JULIE: OK. I was born at the Queen Vic which is no longer - it’s a shopping complex now. Born in Melbourne. My parents are English. My brother is English, he came out when he was about eight months old. So I’m the only Aussie in the family. We were - I went to a Catholic school, primary school. Catholic secondary girl’s school. Which totally turned me against Catholic schools. Having had too much of it. I don’t think it was a very great school. It was - prayers were pushed more than anything - than education. So I think - so I was happy to get out at fifteen.

Went to business college. Discussed it with Mum. It was either got a whole new uniform or whole new books or she spent the money on business college. And I just decided to get out and get into business college. So I left at fourteen, and I could leave at fourteen because I was going to another school.

IN: Yes. And that was one in the city or a local?

JULIE: That was Evelyn Ashby in the Block Arcade.

So, yes, it was a bit expensive, but it would have worked out the same as if she had to buy me a whole new uniform, the books and everything else. So and fees. So we decided - and I’d had enough of school, so only went to Form 3. And within eight months I come second in the class. In my bookkeeping and whatever else. And within eight months I was working at Pelaco in Collingwood.

IN: Oh right. Shirts and -

JULIE: Yes. In the office.

IN: In the office. Yes.

JULIE: They found me the job there. I worked there about eight months. And then came back to Brunswick. Where I’ve been since I was two years old. Came back to Brunswick. I worked at Holeproof.

IN: Yes. Is that there?

JULIE: Yes. That’s all apartments now.

IN: No. That’s all apartments now.

JULIE: I thought it was. Yes.

IN: And worked there for about five years. And then I moved up the road to Leo Hemingway and Pickett. Still in Brunswick.

And that’s where I got married. Married when I was twenty. And stayed there. And stayed there till I had my first child, Christopher. Which was when I was twenty-five. So - and then I stayed home.
IN: Oh you stayed home with the kids. That was some time?

JULIE: Stayed home with the kids. That was one thing I was always going to do.

IN: And would you describe your family as working class - happy, kind of happy?

JULIE: Yeah. There was only two, there was only - my brother was older than me, four years older than me. We were pretty - Like Dad was up the pub, you know, worked - hard worker. You know, did shift work and everything. Then of course, you know, 'cause that was his own thing, he seemed to just go up to the pub after work till six o’clock.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: Mum cooked tea. And Mum didn’t work till I was about nine. So she stayed home. Then my brother started to go off - baseball, cricket, whatever else. So there was only Mum and I.

IN: Yeah.

JULIE: Then Mum got a job when I was eight or nine. And then we had a little bit more money. So, you know, two wages coming in then. And - so then Mum and I used to go off and go to live shows, Carousel, Showboat. All that kind of stuff.

IN: The movies or -?

JULIE: No. The live at the Regent and all that.

IN: Oh, lovely.

JULIE: So I had a couple of good friends. But not, not a lot of friends. Pretty shy, pretty - liked my own company. And still do. I wouldn’t say I was very outgoing or anything like that. I wish I had of known now - I wish I had known then what I know now.

IN: What you know now.

JULIE: And even my personality, I think now, I think I’m a lot more outgoing than I am now than I was. I was very shy and very quiet. Actually I came across I think as a snob. And I think that’s why -

IN: Yes. Because you were shy?

JULIE: I was shy. And, you know, if I’d see people in the street, I wouldn’t sort of say. Where now I’d yell across the street ‘Hi’.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: And wouldn’t bother me. Back then I’d be mortified, if I did that.

IN: So you’ve come out of your shell?

JULIE: I’d say so. Yes.

IN: Do you think school had a big impact on you or what happened to you?

JULIE: I think it did. Because I think the nuns always favoured the ones that could actually - Like the richer parents that could actually add more to the fete or, you know, donate this and donate that. And also worked in the tuck shop and stuff. And my Mum was never one of those people.
IN: Yes.

JULIE: Which made me, when I had my children, to - to get really involved in school. Because I always felt I would have loved my Mum to be up the tuck shop.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: When I think back on it now. Yeah. I really would have. I really would have loved it even if - And she wasn’t that type. So I made sure that my kids -

IN: You did it?

JULIE: I did it for my kids so they didn’t feel that way.

IN: It’s funny the impact that has on your own life. When you look back.

JULIE: And I think I probably would have been perhaps, a little bit more outgoing. If she had been a bit more involved. Because then it would have been -

IN: More confident.

JULIE: Yes. You know, ‘Val’s Mum did the shop’ or - You know what I mean?

IN: Yes.

JULIE: So. Yeah. And so because I was a quiet and I wasn’t a great sportsman. And you know some of the nuns were mad on, if you were a good rounders player or that kind of thing. So if you didn’t sort of do that and you didn’t like getting involved in a lot of things, you were sort of on the outer.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: So - and because of my personality, I was shy. I think that made me worse. And then I didn’t bother because I had a couple of friends I had when I was about thirteen or something. But, but see I had - In the younger days-- nine or ten--were all going off with Mum. We used to get dressed up. You know, in them days you got dressed up to go into town. You didn’t go off in your ratty old jeans.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: And so I was happy.

IN: You had a happy childhood. Is that what you’re saying?

JULIE: Yes. With Mum I think. And I don’t think I really wanted for anything.

IN: No.

JULIE: That I can remember. I mean, granted we could have had - And we had a few holidays, you know, and stuff like that. Just - but Dad was never one for like drives on Sunday. That kind of thing. But then I had Mum.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: So Mum and I were very close. And John was off - my brother was off doing whatever he wanted to do.

IN: What about the sibling thing? Do you think having a brother made a difference to your life or -?
JULIE: Not really. He used to torment the hell out of me actually.

IN: Oh, did he? OK.

JULIE: He always used to put me under the bed and pile the blankets down until I couldn’t breathe. And I’d be screaming.

IN: And were you really frightened then? Or was it just that sibling sort of mucking around?

JULIE: No. He really used to -

IN: He used to really torment you.

JULIE: Torment me, I think. Yes.

IN: So that might have thrown your confidence a bit?


IN: Yeah. It’s quite common I think, in second children.

JULIE: I mean, I wouldn’t say he was really nasty.

IN: No. Not really.

JULIE: But I mean, he’d go and do things like that, you know. And he’d backchat. And, you know, as soon as Mum raised her voice, I mean, I’d disappear, you know. He’d stand and argue. I disappeared, you know.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: Sort of thing. So -

IN: And you Dad wasn’t a violent man or anything? He -

JULIE: No. He just - he worked. He worked hard and he went up the pub. And he liked, you know, I mean he wasn’t drunk or anything, you know. He’d just come home, he had his few drinks and he’d come home on Friday night with his two bottles for the weekend or whatever, you know.

IN: That’s pretty normal really.

JULIE: Well, it was around there for - working class people did that anyway, you know. It wasn’t - I wouldn’t say he was coming home rotten drunk. Mum cooked tea and kept it on the stove, on a pan warm. Till six.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: And at six o’clock, if he wasn’t in the door at five past six, she turned it out.

IN: Oh, good on her. That was pretty ballsy. Wasn’t it?

JULIE: And so therefore, if he was standing there talking till half past six, he’d come home and got a cold tea. Bad luck.

IN: And was it a ‘fish on Friday’ sort of family? Some people have commented on that. I just thought that was funny.

JULIE: Yeah. Well, I suppose so being Catholic.
Interview with Julie  12th May 2004

IN: Yeah.  Yeah.

JULIE: You know, that was sort of - well, we always had fish and chips.

IN: They're traditions.  Yeah.

JULIE: And then I suppose when Mum was working we didn't really have - Well, actually in the little house we did.  Yeah.  We moved from there at seventeen.  We never had hot water running, we had to still boil the kettle.

IN: Yeah.

JULIE: And we never had a shower until we moved into the place where Mum is now, in Albert Street.  And I was seventeen when we moved in there.  So all that time through - we had to wash with bowls.

IN: Yeah.

JULIE: And fill the - But people when I've said, they couldn't believe that we didn't have indoor plumbing.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: In Brunswick.

IN: Oh there were places - there were still places where a nightman used to come occasionally, in those back streets up near Moreland Road.  Not where I lived but, you know, in our house.  But around there, there was still a nightman in those back lanes.  When I was young.  Because I'm older than you.

JULIE: Yes. But the toilet was always down the back still, you know.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: But it was - it flushed, it wasn't a can or anything.

IN: Yes.  A water closet.

JULIE: Yes.  A proper toilet.

IN: Proper toilet.

JULIE: But. Yeah.  But we never had the hot water. We had to boil the kettle to wash the dishes.  And put the kettle on.

IN: And what about the gas?  Did you have the gas meter?

JULIE: Oh yes.  The sixpences.  I used to love watching.  They used to count them fast.  I used to be fascinated with the gas man when he’d tip it all out on the kitchen table and his fingers would all spread right over the money.  And he’d ch-ch-ch, and he’d put it in little bags.  And then -

IN: Yes.

JULIE: And the horse and cart still used to come round with the milk.

IN: And the ice?  Did you have a - or were you too - ?

JULIE: No.

MJC
Interview with Julie  12th May 2004

IN: You were too young for the iceman?

JULIE: That was before my time.

IN: I remember an iceman.

JULIE: I can remember the horse and I can remember the gas man.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: And - Yeah. That was about it but - Yeah. So -Yeah. So it was whatitsname - the hot water.

IN: Can you think of any experiences that influenced you, do you think? You know, in terms of anything that happened to you or anything that was going on that changed you. You know, sometimes people make comments like, things like - Well, 'I was born at the end of the war'. You weren't. But I mean, that sort of comment. 'And the soldiers were coming back' or - You know, how sometimes there were those sort of memories.

JULIE: I remember - I remember when Vietnam started. Because Mum was walking around crying and I couldn't understand why she was crying. But then I realized later that. And I wasn't one that kept on reading the paper up on current affairs.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: It just didn't bother me. So if it didn't - I suppose if it didn't affect my little world, I didn't bother with it.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: You know.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: But then that - And then of course, I realized later, that it was John was coming up for his conscription. You see.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: So she kept saying 'They're not taking my son' and all this sort of stuff. But luckily he never got called up, so -

IN: Oh yeah.

JULIE: So I suppose I seen John in a different light then.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: And then of course - Well, I was seventeen and he was twenty-one, And we only lived in a two bedroom house. He used to sleep on the couch.

IN: Oh, so you had your own room.

JULIE: And I had the room. But his clothes and everything were in my room.

IN: Oh yes.

JULIE: And when he had a wash or a bath or whatever, he had to knock on the door. And if I was in I had to get out while he got dressed and all that kind of stuff, you know.
IN: Yeah.

JULIE: So when I -

IN: It might have been a sense of your own privacy or something too. That happening.

JULIE: I looked the other way I think because we were - It never phased me that I could see 

him running around in a towel or something like that.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: Because you know, even though -

IN: You were just used to it.

JULIE: Yes. You know, and his bed used to be strewn out on the couch, or put down on the 

couch, every night, you know.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: When I think back now, the kids of today would be mortified by it.

IN: Horrified, wouldn’t they? When you think how many kids slept top and tail in beds and 

all those things.

JULIE: And even when I’ve said about different things to people my age, I mean, they all had 

their own rooms, they all did. So when I think back now on what other people have 

actually said about that period of time. I suppose in a way we were sort of pretty poor.

IN: Yeah.

JULIE: Well, poor.

IN: Yes. I know what you mean. Compared with -

JULIE: Looking back now, you know, well other people had, you know, ‘Let’s have a shower’, 

you know. We didn’t have that till six or something. So I was seventeen and we didn’t 

have indoor plumbing - boil the kettle for the dishes. People look at me weird, you 

know. And then they say ‘Oh well, we had our own room’. And I say ‘We only had 

two bedrooms’, ‘But didn’t you have a brother?’ “Yeah. Well he slept on the couch’. 

“What in the lounge room”? Yeah. I get that.

IN: Sometimes there was a sleep-out. People always talk about the sleep-out. They slept, or 

the boys slept in the sleep-out. The bungalow or something.

JULIE: We didn’t have one of those. So to give me a bit of privacy. And at one stage I 

remembered, before John did that, Mum moved me into her room.

IN: Sometimes there was a sleep-out. People always talk about the sleep-out. They slept, or 

the boys slept in the sleep-out. The bungalow or something.

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the boys slept in the sleep-out. The bungalow or something.

JULIE: We didn’t have one of those. So to give me a bit of privacy. And at one stage I 

remembered, before John did that, Mum moved me into her room.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: When I was about twelve. And put a screen around me. So I was in my Mum and Dad’s 

room with a screen around me, around my bed.

IN: Could you hear anything?

JULIE: Yes. I could.

IN: Oh, could you? And you were only twelve. So that’s the beginning of your sex 
education.

MJC
Interview with Julie 12th May 2004

JULIE: Well. Yeah.

IN: That’s actually fairly rare in a way, isn’t it? Although in the old days it was very common.

JULIE: Well. Yeah.

IN: Because parents had to sleep in the same room in the old days.

JULIE: Yes. I suppose so, you know. I suppose it was to give John - Because at twelve, he would have been sixteen. So I mean, to give him his bit of that time. So I moved in with Mum, with a screen around me. But I mean, you know -

IN: Well, that’s the start of your sex education.

JULIE: And I don’t know, that sort of - I don’t know if that turned me off. I don’t know.

IN: It probably would.

JULIE: You know, not that I really dwelled on it, you know. But. Yeah.

IN: What’s happening.

JULIE: And of course, at twelve I had a lot of sickness too. A lot of the sinus and everything. I used to have. Oh. About every three weeks I’d be off two weeks of school.

IN: Oh yes.

JULIE: And I think that had a lot to do with - Because every time I went back, I had so much work to catch up on.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: You know, I had to borrow somebody’s book to catch up. And you’d be catching up on what you were doing, plus catching up on two weeks work. I mean, when I got sick, I was really sick. I was in bed like with blinds pulled. I couldn’t have the, you know, bad migraines and all that kind of stuff. So that went on for probably about two years. So I was about fourteen. So then I grew out of it.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: And so I suppose I wasn’t the greatest scholar.

IN: No.

JULIE: And I think that once every time you got your sums wrong, you had to say a ‘Hail Mary’.

IN: Yes. As a negative.

JULIE: And that negative thing -

IN: Yeah.

JULIE: I just got into high school and then I got that sinus thing.
IN: Over and over.

JULIE: Yeah. Every - like every five weeks I had books. I’d try to be sitting up till all hours of the night, you know.

IN: Yeah.

JULIE: Trying to catch up with the work. And do the work that was going on.

IN: And that interruption often makes a big difference to people.

JULIE: Which was - I found was really hard because, I mean, if you haven’t got the background of it. You can’t do what you’re doing now if you don’t know what you did last week. And I mean, I was doing what I was doing, what the lesson was today. But I didn’t know where I was going with that.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: You know, that would really - And I just - That’s why Mum said ‘Well, you know, you’re fourteen you know. If you stay another year’. And I said ‘No way. If I stay another year it’ll be another year’. And she said ‘Well by the time - and the uniforms were expensive, you know, the whole hoo-haa. And she said ‘Look its going to cost me just as much money by the time I pay your fees and buy you a whole new uniform and all that. You can go to Evelyn Ashby and you can train for a job that you want to do. And you can go out to work’. So by fifteen I was out working.

IN: Yes. And you enjoyed that? Did you like business school? It was different to school?

JULIE: I did.

IN: It was different. Yes.

JULIE: You know, I didn’t start till ten, and I went till one. And then I had an hour off for lunch. And then from two to four.

IN: So it was more like adult education than a school thing. Yeah..

JULIE: You know, so I wandered in these And I knew every little nook and cranny around, you know, the little arcades. And what shop to go to, you know. Because you wander around. Met some other young girls sort of thing. Yeah. I liked it. It was good, you know. And I liked to work, you know. I came second in class, so I mean I was, you know.

IN: You suddenly - Yeah.

JULIE: And I think that was really good for my self-esteem, actually. Because I did so well in it, you know. But the only thing is, that was being a comptometrist.

IN: Oh, is that what it was? That was like that little funny machine.

JULIE: And it was like a big machine like this with all these rows of numbers, you know. And then years later, when we went to - I went to an outing with Christopher, and I think it was Grade 4. We went to the museum. And we went into one of the schoolrooms, you
Interview with Julie  12th May 2004

know. And ‘Oh my God’, what’s sitting there is a comptometrist. And I said ‘Oh’ and
Christopher goes ‘What’s that’. ‘Oh’ I said, ‘That’s a calculator machine’. ‘How does
it work’? So here I go td-d-d-d. You know, because you press it - like you press
numbers if you want to multiply something. You press twelve and you want to multiply
by twelve, you press it down twelve times.

IN: Right.

JULIE: It comes to 144.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: And if you want to divide, you use the little, tiny numbers on it. So I’m demonstrating
and of course the guy, the teacher there and he’s fascinated. ‘Cause he was only a
young guy, he was about twenty-six, you know. And I’m, you know, I’m pretty near
thirty.

IN: Showing your age.

JULIE: ‘Well, I was trained at this, you know’. ‘Oh I’ve often wondered how they worked’.
Godfather, you know! So that didn’t go down too well, that I’d trained. But I liked it.

IN: It’s an early computer. If you think about it.

JULIE: Oh, it is I suppose, you know. And then I got into - And then we went into the little
calculators, you know, the little electronic calculators. And you could add up, stuff like
that.

IN: Like a big ……. 

JULIE: But I used to do the books and stuff like that with it. And stock. I used to work, when I
was at Hemingways, you know. The vans used to go round to the shops with cigarettes
and stuff.

IN: Yes. I remember. Yeah.

JULIE: And I used to do all the vans, the stock that they had on. What they’d sold, what they
got loaded up and that. So I used to like doing that.

IN: Yeah. Well you got up to when you were married then. Any experiences happen
during those years before you actually got into ACE? That you feel had a big influence.

JULIE: Well, I was married for twenty years. And I don’t know - I think sometimes - I think I
probably married young to get out of home.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: Even though I had a happy home. But when I was seventeen, my auntie died. And so
my uncle was left with eight kids. And the youngest was only two. And so Mum took
her on. And she came to live with us. I suppose in a way, as I look back now, I
suppose a bit of jealousy.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: And that. And I often kind of thought of the times Mum took me out to Showboat. And
that when I got a job and could afford it, I would take her out.

IN: Yes.

MJC
JULIE: And when it came to the time for me to be taking her out, she was too busy with Uncle Bill’s family.

IN: Oh! Yes. Yes.

JULIE: She was over there. Like she’d bake all week, you know. And then on Friday night she’d go over there loaded up with pies and sausage rolls, you know.

IN: Was that her brother? Or was it -?

JULIE: Yes. Her younger brother. And then she’d come back on Sunday. And so I suppose a bit of jealousy.

IN: A bit of your nose out of joint.

JULIE: I think so. I look back now.

IN: You’d been Mum’s sort of friend. And you pictured that going on when you were a bit older.

JULIE: And even when she was at home, knowing she was there. So she was -

IN: The change in the dynamics. Yeah.

JULIE: With the two year old, you know.

IN: And yet she didn’t have the status of the new baby, that was partly yours.

JULIE: No.

IN: Like being your Mum’s baby.

JULIE: Yes. I think so.

IN: You would have been part of that.

JULIE: Yeah. So I suppose that’s why I got out.

JULIE: And in the end, she was sort of busy. Threw myself more in with the kids I think.

IN: Yeah.

JULIE: So half of our married life, he was unemployed.

IN: Yeah.

JULIE: And so I was sort of busy. Threw myself more in with the kids I think.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: And he never come out with us. Holidays was always me and the two kids. Off down the park, off into town or to the zoo or various other places.
I suppose in a way he was a good Dad to the kids. I mean, he wasn’t really belting into them or anything like that. But then later on he did me.

JULIE: He was always very verbal, abusive verbally, always. And very quick-tempered.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: And the kids sort of learned to sort of, you know, and I did too. Just sort of, you know, don’t aggravate Dad.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: Just keep the hell out of it.

IN: So you sort of in a way live in fear of -

JULIE: You do.

IN: Aggravating something.

JULIE: And then finally.

IN: Which is domestic violence. There’s no doubt about that.

JULIE: Exactly.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: And then finally after that. After twenty years, he started to get drinking. He started to get really - I’d think ‘No that’s it’. So that’s when I walked out.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: I left everything. And started all over again.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: Forty-two I was. I signed the lease on the house on my forty-second birthday.

IN: Yes. So it’s a milestone. Yes. With the kids.

JULIE: And went private rent, which killed me. Every week I was going into debt. But at least the kids, I mean, the kids would be sitting in the kitchen after school. We’d be talking. And you’d hear the car up the lane, ‘cause he used to go up - And as soon as they’d hear the car, they’d disappear like that.

IN: Like frightened rabbits.

JULIE: Yeah. Not that he ever belted into them, I can honestly say. But they didn’t like it because they knew it would be on between him and me.

IN: And they’d pick up on that violence.

JULIE: And he’d get really suspicious. Like if there was two cups on the sink. ‘Who’ve you had?’, you know. ‘You’ve had somebody round’. And because I was on school council and various other things. Like the Principal might ring me or something.

IN: Yes.

MJC
JULIE: You know, ‘Oh, you’re on with the Principal’.

IN: Oh. Yeah.

JULIE: Oh look, I was on with everybody in Brunswick basically. I don’t know why. Because, I mean, after the nuns, I mean. That turned me off sex for anything. But anyway -

IN: Not to mention Mum and Dad’s bedroom.

JULIE: And Mum and Dad’s bedroom. Yeah. But, I mean, you know. Yeah. But see he got really possessive. He was always a bit possessive but he got worse. I think it - and when I think, you know, I’ve done a lot of thinking now, in the last nine - eight/nine years. I think he was very insecure. I think he was getting to that stage. And I don’t think men grow.

IN: No. No.

JULIE: I really don’t. I think women do. And I don’t know whether it’s because they’re more involved with their kids. They’re more involved with kinders, school and that.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: I don’t know - I’m not saying every mother is whatsisname. I’m not saying that any father doesn’t care. And it’s not that even if you don’t care. It’s not that you don’t get involved. But - He wasn’t a very, a really involved person, you know. Like he was -

IN: There’s that community thing. Women get into the community.

JULIE: Yeah. I still say - And I think - and you talk to people. Women seem to be more open. You talk to them and you learn things. He wouldn’t say anything about it. He only - And I don’t think men talk like that. And I don’t think - they have their comfortable little zone. I don’t think they want to venture out of it.

IN: There’s that community thing. Women get into the community.

JULIE: Yes.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: You know. And I always kept saying ‘Well, I want to go back to school’. Because I always had this thing, even though I - it was my choice.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: I always wanted to go back and get my Leaving Certificate or something. I always felt that I was inadequate because I left in Form 3.

IN: Yes. It’s funny a few people have said that to me. That -

JULIE: And yet, and yet I did extremely, fantastically well when I went to business school as a comptometrist, you know.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: And you did. And you worked. In those days they didn’t sort of count work as any sort of, anything to do with learning or anything. Did they?

IN: And you did. And you worked. In those days they didn’t sort of count work as any sort of, anything to do with learning or anything. Did they?

JULIE: So, you know, I just sort of had this thing. A few of my friends had gone into teachers.

IN: You know, I had that sort of inferiority complex I suppose. That I was a bit dumb.

IN: Yes.
Interview with Julie 12th May 2004

JULIE: You know. And so he kept saying ‘Oh what do you want to do a course in CAE?’ Of course I was going to get on with everybody at TAFE, wasn’t I? So I don’t know. So when I moved out, I thought ‘Well that’s it’. I wanted something to do, which led me to the ad in the paper, Adult Education.

IN: Yes. Yes.

JULIE: Which led me to -

IN: Come up here.

JULIE: ACE.

IN: Yeah. That was my next question. Where and how did you find out about ACE? And it was an ad in the paper?

JULIE: Ad in the paper.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: And it was just the Certificate in General Education. And then of course, I came up and spoke to you. I think we were about two hours, upstairs in the library there.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: And you just said - When I said what everything I’d done, you just said ‘You’re going to be bored silly doing that.

IN: If I put you in that. Yeah.

JULIE: So you took me into VCE.

IN: Yeah. I know you were very, very worried about it.

JULIE: I just thought ‘My God, you known VCE’. I was thinking ‘Oh no’. You know, bit by bit, I mean I haven’t got it. I never carried on to get it.

IN: But you did how many subjects?

JULIE: And I don’t think -

IN: But you did how many subjects?

JULIE: I did Computers. And I did English I & II, English Lit. I & II, Human Development I & II and Computers I & II.

IN: And I mean that’s, you know - VCE ....

JULIE: But I don’t ever think about it now.

IN: You wouldn’t care. But it’s still nice to have done it.

JULIE: But I can sit back - And now if I fill out any forms and they say ‘What’s your year of education’? I put Year II.

IN: And also you’ve done Certificate II in IT.

JULIE: Yes.

IN: Well, that’s the same - equivalent.

MJC
Interview with Julie  12th May 2004

JULIE: So just that to be able to put that I did Year 11.
IN: Yes.
JULIE: I’m happy, I don’t care if I’ve got my VCE.
IN: Oh no. No.
JULIE: It doesn’t bother me now. But did back then because I really felt that I was inadequate at Form 3.
IN: Yeah. I know. It’s strange. One of the others interviewed said something very similar. And yet he’d done amazing things. But he said ‘Oh no. I never got my Year 12’. And he felt he was the only one who hadn’t done that. Which is rubbish of course.
JULIE: Yes. I know. Well, that’s how I’d think. So that’s what I started that. And then of course I got started doing more and more. And then I got offered the job of doing a couple of days a week.
IN: Yes.
JULIE: Here I am nine years later.
IN: Yeah. Is it nine years?
JULIE: ’97. Eight years. Sorry, eight years.
IN: It’s surprising isn’t it?
JULIE: Like a big family.
IN: That’s a good way. Yeah.
JULIE: I’d say very - very community based. Very whatsnname. And I remember the words that you said to me when I started there. You said to me ‘You’ll never get done what you’re supposed to get done’.
IN: It’s true.
JULIE: ‘97. Eight years. Sorry, eight years.
IN: It’s surprising isn’t it?
JULIE: How would you have described ACE when you first got involved?
IN: You’ll never get done. You’ll come in and you’ll say you’ve got this, this and this. And you’ll never get done what you have to be done. Because so many people call in here. And they start talking. And that proved -
IN: It’s true.
JULIE: Still sometimes. Well, not so much now. Say up until the last two years. It was still -
IN: Still the same.
JULIE: That was still the same.
IN: Yes.
JULIE: I think for that - Up at the library, not so much down here. But when I was up at the library, up until last year, people would pop in.
IN: Yes.

MJC
Interview with Julie  12th May 2004

JULIE: Vera keeps coming back, every now and then. You know, Vera?

IN: Oh, has she been in?

JULIE: She dropped in just before Christmas.

IN: And Margaret?

JULIE: Margaret K?

IN: Yes. And -

JULIE: Actually seen her the other day at the doctors.

IN: And Susie?

JULIE: Yeah. And -  Oh yeah.

IN: Cal came in the other day.

JULIE: Yes. He just popped in. Yes. He said he used to pop in.

IN: Yes. He was in the other day.

JULIE: But even other people that you didn’t even know. They’d come up and they say that about -

Phone rings

IN: Oh. No. No. No. This is what I wanted. It’s good background. You described. Yeah. You just described ACE as a big family. Yeah.

JULIE: Well, a big family. I liked the way every one coming in. And as you said ‘You’ll never get done. Because people will come in’. And you said that ‘That’s what we’re all about’. That was what you said. I always remembered that. Because I always tried to -

IN: That humanity based thing.

JULIE: We were all about people. Getting them back to work or getting them back - Or getting their self-confidence boosted up. And some, even new migrants. Well, then mainly it was the English. Greek ladies or, you know, Italian ladies wanted to - Just finally wanted to get out, you know. Husbands are letting loose a little bit. I think with their kids perhaps are growing up a bit more and saying ‘Come on Dad. Let Mum go to English classes’. I think that’s got, you know. Yeah. That’s -

They’re really nice, you know. I can honestly say, I don’t think there’s been - There are a few oddballs, you get everywhere. But on the whole, I think, you know. I think that’s what drew people to ACE. Because it was more - I think when they come up there and you spent that time in. And even if you said ‘Oh, you know, we do a computer class’. And I’d say ‘Well I’ve done it, you know. If I can do it, anybody can do it’. And you know, you say that to people - And they say ‘Oh, do you really’. I said ‘Look’, you know. ‘I come up here to do a thing and I got talked into VCE’. ‘Oh no. I don’t want to do VCE’, they’d say. And I’d say ‘Well, I felt the same way. But, you know, just take one at a time. Little steps’.

IN: Yeah.

JULIE: That’s what I used to say to people. And then the next thing, they’d come and they’d do that. And then later on they’d say ‘Gee, I don’t know -’ And the next thing, they’d be off to TAFE, you know. Well, I never got that bug. But -

MJC
Interview with Julie  12th May 2004

IN: Yeah.

JULIE: Some do. And they’d go further and yet some people I’ve seen in the supermarket. And they’ve said ‘Oh Gee. I’m glad, you know, I come back’. And it’s just nice. I mean, not that it’s happening a lot. Probably two or three times.

IN: That someone said it.

JULIE: That someone said ‘Oh, you know that talk we had’. Or you know. And then they’d always come and talk to you as well, you know.

IN: Yeah. That’s part of it, isn’t it?

JULIE: But it’s kind of nice when, you know.

IN: Some positive feedback.

JULIE: I’ve been there and been frightened about going back and trying to do something. And it’s really hard when you’re knocked down for twenty years. Saying ‘You don’t want to do that. You don’t want to do that’. And you start to believe you can’t do it.

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

JULIE: And you know -

IN: Yes.

Now the question I’m going to ask now is. How would you describe ACE now? Now you’ve been in this position for so many years that you should be able to see. Do you think there’s been a change? And if so - I want you to be open about it.

JULIE: I think there’s a change.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: I think, I think, I think there’s still that - Let’s just say for arguments sake, you say family 90% and 10% work. Like let’s just say for a thing. I’d say now you’d get down to about 40% family ACE and 60%. I think a lot of the reports, the accounting, the different stuff, admin stuff that has to be done. I find, I think it puts a lot of pressure on everyone. I don’t think people are as relaxed as they used to be. Because of the stress and that, I think. And there’s a lot of guidelines, I think, and rules and regulations that have changed in every business.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: If you want to survive you want the money and you want the grants and everything. Unfortunately to get the money, to get the grants, you have to do all the paperwork. And I think that takes away a lot of the - Oh what’s the word I’m looking for? Like sort of easiness, you know, where you -
IN: Yes.

JULIE: Stress. It puts a lot of stress on people. And people aren’t less stressed. Yes. You could wander up and you could talk to somebody and even though you talk to someone now, you sort of feel ‘Well I can only - Hurry up. Hurry up’. Because I want to go back and do the pays. ‘I’ve got to go back and write like this’. Do you know what I mean?

IN: Yes.

JULIE: That’s how I feel anyhow. And what I’ve noticed in you and other people. I think that’s what it is.

IN: Yes.

JULIE: But, you know, you have -

IN: Thank you for that. I’ll have this typed and give you a copy.
IN: Interview with Lee 13th of the 12th '04
Lee, you know you can stop this interview at any point or not answer any questions. Just press the button there or just say no whatever and that’s fine. Or ask me anything you like. OK.

LEE: Yes.

IN: The first few are some general questions and then we’ll move on to things about you, in relation to Adult Community Education, which I’ll call ACE. So when I refer to ACE, you know that’s Adult Community Education as distinct from TAFE and higher ed. Can you tell me a bit about yourself, like where you were born and about your family?

LEE: Born in Melbourne, forty-seven years ago. Sorry forty-six years ago. I’m jumping the gun there. Regular schools, nothing outstanding, regular student. I had a great sporting career. Come from a fabulous middle class family. And now I’m single with two children. Work part-time, I’ve worked in hospitality for twenty odd years. And I’ve gone back to education in the last twelve months.

IN: That’s fine.
What do you think helped to make you the person you are now? Things like your personality, experiences or whatever you think sort of formed you or changed you.

LEE: I think my family for one thing, they’re very grounded. I think sport, sports have been a good self-discipline, confidence building, good self-esteem, all those things. And work, being part of a team has helped me in the workplace and in all aspects of my life I think.

IN: So when you grew up, how did you feel about yourself? Did you feel positive?

LEE: I always felt good about, very positive.

IN: And any - I notice you said there you were a single mother. So that means that something’s happened in your life maybe.

LEE: Yes. It has. I separated from my partner of fifteen years three years ago. And I have two girls, twelve and ten, who are fabulous kids.

IN: Thank you. And you really felt positive about your own schooling, didn’t you?

LEE: Yes. Yes.

IN: You finished Year 12?

LEE: Finished Year 12.

IN: That’s excellent.
How did you find out about ACE?

LEE: Through Heather.

IN: Heather?

LEE: Heather Graham who was the mentor up here. I worked with her husband who suggested maybe I come in and see her. And we went from there.

IN: And that was at the end of last year?

LEE: No. Beginning of this year.

IN: Beginning of - OK. And why did you get involved?
Interview with Lee  13th December 2004

LEE: Because, because my life had done a complete three-sixty in the last three years. I decided that now was the time that I could do things that I wanted to do and never completed. And education is something that’s always interested me, and I thought now was the time to change that and -

IN: Excellent. I’ve got a question about describing ACE when you first became involved, but as that’s this year, you know, it wouldn’t have changed much for you I could see. But do you find it the same or different to other types of schooling and education, coming to an ACE? But if you haven’t got any experience of it, that’s fine too.

LEE: Because it’s been twenty-seven years since I’ve been in any sort of formal education, for me coming back, it was just the nicest way for me to be eased back into education in some form, where I felt very comfortable. I wasn’t, I didn’t feel threatened or inadequate or competitive. I just felt that it was, it was just a nice transition for me.

IN: OK. And you don’t see any differences between when you came in at the start of the year, and now towards the end? Or, you know, it’s a bit short I know, but I’ve asked the others.

LEE: The only difference is the, well I suppose, because I was the person, the only person from the beginning to the very end. It was a passing parade of other people that were here, and then they weren’t here. And then the new lot that came in and gleaned what they could from it.

IN: Yes. That’s what we call ’rolling intake’, OK. And in a way that’s always been something that’s happened in ACE. But I’ll admit this year it has been more than usual. But we’ve always called it ‘rolling intake’ and a lot of teachers don’t actually like doing it.

LEE: Oh. OK.

IN: Because as you can imagine, you set up a structure of a course and in traditional classes -

LEE: Yeah. But I don’t think this is traditional in that form.

IN: It’s not. Yes.

LEE: You know, like that every week I had something else to do, and it didn’t necessarily mean that everyone else was doing it.

IN: No. That’s right. Well that’s what it’s meant to do. Because there’s no point in saying ‘well all sit down and do spreadsheets’, if you’re not going to use them next year or whatever.

LEE: I know - we’ve got the rocks up. It’s that little table.

IN: How would you describe a TAFE to someone new to adult education? What is a TAFE?

LEE: A TAFE. A TAFE to me is an institution that offers you a go ahead as far as whatever you have chosen to do, in terms of more diplomas than degrees. But it offers things like hospitality, you know, design, textiles. Those sort of things.

IN: Or trades.

LEE: Or trades in preference to a degree in sociology or - That’s how I would describe TAFE.

IN: Fine. And how would you describe ACE?

LEE: ACE. How would I describe it. Well for someone like me it was a really nice way to be, for the transition to happen, for me to go back to school. To learn, to have people to talk to, to discuss the issues about education and what we wanted to do and how we wanted to pursue it. It was, it was good to have a varied age group because they had very different opinions about general issues. What else? The multiculturalism too was something that I found really interesting.
IN: Good. What do you think makes ACE and TAFE different or similar? Can you see differences or similarities?

LEE: Well, I think the difference is that you’re not offering what TAFE is offering. You’re offering opportunity for these people to gain entry into a TAFE or a higher education. And I think that’s really important because if you’ve been out of the system for a long time it’s not, I would imagine, that easy to be able to just jump into a higher education institution. But that would be very overwhelming. And this has just been a nice pathway for me, my own experience. In hindsight now, I’m sort of really glad I didn’t get into last year’s course because this year has been a fantastic learning curve for me. Personally as well as educationally.

IN: So in terms of what you like about ACE, it’s sort of that comfort and preparation.

LEE: It’s the preparation more than anything. It’s been - you’re able to go at your level and keep going, you know, without having to do what everybody else is doing. And the revision and all that. Every week you are able to go further.

IN: OK. And what don’t you like? What can you see are its flaws?

LEE: Its flaws.

IN: There are, you know, quite a lot of flaws in it.

LEE: I suppose the flaw that I found with the dynamics in the group, you know, with that rolling intake. The people coming in demanding time, demanding that you do a million things for them. And that’s probably a flaw. Although they have the right to do that I suppose. But, what else?

IN: Oh, that’s OK.

LEE: That’s a bit of a bugbear to me that’s all.

IN: That’s a bit of a bugbear to me that’s all.

LEE: That’s fine. That’s what I wanted.

LEE: It was a bit of a bugbear, but that was just dynamics and personalities, I suppose.

IN: Yes. Yes. And what about the future? Can you see a need for ACE?

LEE: Oh, absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. You know, especially because there are so many women out there that are in similar circumstances to me. That don’t want this government to support them and don’t want to work at menial jobs. They want to go further and make their life better.

LEE: Yes. Yes. They want to, I’m trying to think of the word, explore more. They, they - for me I feel like I’m a waste of talent working in a sandwich bar.

IN: Yes.

LEE: You could smile and be nice and make sandwiches all our lives, but that’s not fulfilling for me.

IN: Yes. Yes. Oh well, you’re a bright girl and you know it. You know that you know what you can pick up, you know. You know, you look at other people. And you know that and I know that.

LEE: So, yeah, for me learning is an opportunity.

IN: You feel you could do more?
Interview with Lee  13th December 2004

LEE: Oh, absolutely.
IN: OK. That’s great. Thank you. Now I’ll just flick over these. Some of these questions are similar to the last ones so I won’t ask them again because, as you can see, some apply to different people. The people like Learn Links and the changes in IT. But - so I’ll ask you about students and Diploma of Further Ed. OK.
LEE: Sure.
IN: What have you studied in ACE?
LEE: Oh goodness. Self reflection, Training Small Groups, which I really liked, writing skills, IT skills, psychology.
IN: That was a VCE unit, wasn’t it?
LEE: Yes.
IN: And Diploma of Further Ed?
LEE: And Diploma of Further Ed.
IN: Which covers a lot of that, doesn’t it? OK. And I think you did a business unit too?
LEE: Yes. I did too.
IN: That’s a lot to fit in a year, you know.
LEE: I forgot about that.
IN: I think you’ve done - and computers. Oh, that’s IT, you said.
LEE: Yes. That’s right.
IN: Why did you choose ACE and not TAFE? I don’t know if you know, but they do run similar courses in the CAE.
LEE: I figured that through the other girls talking. But this was - location was perfect, the time was perfect and it was affordable.
IN: Yes. OK. Have you seen - through talking to us all and hanging round the place and being in a lot of courses. Have you seen any other changes or heard people talking about them? Don’t worry if you haven’t. I just wondered because of the changes happening in the sector this year. And I just wondered if that had impacted, as a student.
LEE: No.
IN: No. That’s fine.
LEE: No. Not at all.
IN: If you’d gone on to TAFE or university as well as ACE, what are the differences? Now you will be so I might ask you again when that happens.
LEE: Yes, that’s fine.
IN: Why do you think that people do go to ACE centres? What could you say from looking around and observation and things? Not just yourself personally but everyone, students.
Lee: Because I think it offers that nice community feeling about people that have that, you know, English as a second language especially. It’s very accepting of them. And, yeah.

Interviewer (IN): Good. OK.

Lee: I just think it’s a very accepting environment.

IN: Is it?

Lee: For everyone.

IN: I’ll just make a note of that before we move on, so I don’t forget what you said. And the other one I just wanted to ask you about was the Diploma of Further Education. Because as you know not many people do that. And in fact not many people in the state do it. So it’s quite interesting. And most people don’t realise they do it at RMIT and they do it at the CAE. And there are only a few ACE providers still do it.

Lee: Oh, OK.

IN: I think they had about twelve initially. A couple have dropped out and so not many of us do it. I’ve got are, or were, you involved in the Diploma of Further Education? Well, that’s as a student obviously. And you’ve been involved for the whole of this year, haven’t you? A complete year.

Lee: Yes. The complete year.

IN: OK. And just let me say, you’re the only one I know who’s finished three units. Which we’re really happy about. And you’re waiting for ……

Lee: ………………..

IN: Now the good news is you put in a good application. The bad news is some people have applied seven times. They tell me.

Lee: Oh, don’t tell me that because ……

IN: Yeah, you’ve got your - you’ll do anything if you’re motivated. How did you find out about the Diploma of Further Ed? Through Heather? Because I know that you said -

Lee: Yes.

IN: OK. So that was through Heather on staff here whose husband -

Lee: Yes. I worked with.

IN: Worked with. OK. And is the course different or the same as anything else you’ve done? Say in TAFE or whatever. How would you describe it as different?

Lee: I don’t really have enough to compare it with.

IN: No.

Lee: M.

IN: Yeah. OK.

Lee: Not having like - this is the first time I’ve been in any sort of formal education for twenty-seven years. The rest has just been life education.
IN: Yes. And do you think this course has a future?
LEE: Oh, absolutely. And I would recommend it to anybody to come and, just for their own self-esteem, their own confidence, to be able to put pen to paper and know you can write an essay. You can write three different letters, you can research something and write it up.

IN: Yes.
LEE: And all that is really good for your own self-confidence and your own self-esteem. Just as a person, even if you never use it. To accomplish that is a big thing.

IN: Good. And if you could change the course, what would you recommend to change it? Just personally I’m only thinking, based on what you think would make it better.
LEE: How to change it? What could make it better? I don’t know, because I can’t find fault with it, M.

IN: Anything else you’d like to say about the Diploma of Further Ed?
LEE: Oh, encourage people to do it. Just, you know, anybody who’s heard about, you know, pursuing an interest in writing or IT or teaching. And just going back to school, just because they want to experience more. Do it. Do it. Yeah.

IN: Thank you very much for that. Now I’ll transcribe this and I’ll make sure you get a copy.
LEE: Thank you.

FINISH
IN: Maeve, remember you can stop at any point if you don’t want to go ahead and - OK I’ll give you a copy of this when its finished and just answer however you like.

MAEVE: OK

IN: Can you tell me a bit about yourself - like where you were born and about your family?

MAEVE: I was born in Brunswick.  I was born in Carlton actually but Brunswick where we lived so I suppose we’ve got to say that.  I was the youngest of three, an older sister and brother, they were 9 and 10 years older than me.  Come from a rather pretty ordinary sort of background.  We had nothing.  Basically my father had a few problems with grog and backing horses.  So he worked hard, he always went to work, so Friday night to Sunday he had his problem.  My mother was constantly poor.  We had to live with my grandmother who they didn’t like each other and I was the go-between with them and sometimes through the fighting and carrying on.  We were sort of stuck in a room most of the time, just her and I.  Then we’d roam the streets of Brunswick going to visit aunts because in those days everyone lived close by and aunts and uncles that lived all round.  Friday nights we’d go up the pictures or visit aunts.  I can’t say it was a marvelous life, it was a bit horrendous at times but at least it wasn’t boring, I’ve got to say that.

IN: And how about school?

MAEVE: I went to school, I hated primary school, I was awful there, I was sort of a misfit and no-one liked me.  I often now go round to where my daughter lives behind the school I went to and I take my little grandson for walks and I think they’re the kids in these bloody streets that were the ones that wouldn’t talk to me.  My sister and brother went to school before me but they did very well there and they loved it.  I hated South West Brunswick.  I didn’t mind high school, I went to Moreland Central and that was quite good, I got on better there.  I liked it better when I went to work.  I think I was a bit more independent and life was a little bit easier.  But just when life gets easier something else goes wrong.

IN: Indeed, indeed.

IN: And what about your own family?

MAEVE: My children?  My daughters - I have two daughters and a son.  My son has all sorts of problems.  He’s had all sorts of problems for years; got a lot of kids.  Does a lot of harm I’d say.  He complains, uses, he drinks too much, he smokes too much, he takes marijuana too much; he backs too many race horses.  He can’t seem to settle down.  I think now at this stage of his life he’s completely lost.  The daughters all right, she can’t have children but, the eldest daughter; she’ll probably be the one that’ll sort of keep us all going.  But she’s got a good job and a nice partner.  My other daughter though tries very hard, she works all the time, has a little boy, her partner has his own problems and the little boy I think has got a few.  He has a few communication problems to say the least.  I hope he’ll come all right.  He’s being assessed at the moment so let’s hope he’s OK.

IN: What do you think helped make you the person you are now?  You know, when you look back over your life you think what have been your main sort of influences … personalities, experiences?
MAEVE: A combination of people that you’ve met and been with and your lifestyle. Your childhood. Like my grandmother had a big influence on me because I was very fond of my grandmother. She talked to me a lot and she was a great reader. She was totally different from my mother. My mother was a very nice, kind woman and my grandmother didn’t like each other. But my grandmother was a very interesting woman. She had a mother who had come out from Scotland and was one of the gentry types, ladylike woman. My grandmother was one who had to keep her going and then she had a husband, my grandfather, that was a weak sort of man but she was a strong woman my Nana. She loved to read, she liked to talk to you about books and all the experiences when she was a little girl in Carlton and she influenced me a lot. And my Dad, even for all his faults, he was a funny man. I think I got a sense of humour off him. People you’ve worked with, people you’ve met along the way. Where you’ve lived, I think that makes a bit of - coming from the part of Brunswick I came from they were an interesting mob I mean, crooks, gangsters and a wild sort of people.

IN: But interesting

MAEVE: Kathy what’s-her-name lived next door. ……. Kathy Pettingill and different people.
You went to other extremes. People like Peter Thompson and Frankie Sedgman and Mr. Curtin actually came from opposite us and also - so we had that sort - oh - I think Brunswick influenced us a lot. It really did. That type of area in Brunswick and it was a very down to earth sort of, but people that were, had experienced everything I think. They didn’t let barriers stand in their way even though they were poor, they kicked on and went on through life.

IN: So there was a sense of community.

MAEVE: Oh yes, much more community than there is now. People were closer to each other and even just amongst your neighbours you were able to drift in and there were always relatives or friends around. Now there seems to be that isolation.

IN: Yes.

MAEVE: I can understand people that come from other countries, that come from sort of parts of Africa and that, they’ve got nothing but they’ve got that sense of belonging. Have you ever felt that? You can see they want to be even wanting to go back to those places. Better than living in an isolated, sterile sort of existence as we do in the area I come from. It’s a sterile existence now I feel.

IN: Do you think so, in Pascoe Vale? Same in Coburg?

MAEVE: Not in Sydney Road. You’re always running into.

IN: Round here?

MAEVE: I mean for my own sake, I don’t find people like myself that have had my background. There is sort of more of a community atmosphere. But Pascoe Vale, no, not South; maybe up the other end but not South. Cause a lot of new people in our street too I suppose.

IN: How would you describe your early years of schooling? I know you’ve done a bit on that but, you know, what did you do at secondary? How old were you when you left?
MAEVE: I was only 15 when I left. I wasn’t very good at school. I found school a bit of a - I didn’t like exams, I didn’t like school, I didn’t like the study, and I didn’t like anything about it. My mother, my mother always had great plans, my brother offered to send me on to anywhere, but. And I was always surrounded by books and things at home, but I just didn’t like school, I didn’t like the structure of it - of school having to go and - being told. Even though they were quite nice teachers at Moreland. They were really nice and understanding. It was me I think. I’m a bit slow.

IN: You were not.

MAEVE: Yes I was.

IN: Not with reading and writing. You didn’t have any problems with those.

MAEVE: I was not too bright, didn’t grasp things to easy. Then I went to learn the calculating machine. In those days it was the next best thing to a computer. Actually I went on to one that they referred to as the computer, one that used to throw your prices up …… into a …. and add it there and all that. And I worked for different places but I loved working for Southdown Press which was Rupert Murdoch actually. And he was a good boss, he paid well, he gave us good sort of conditions, holidays and that. Ruthless man. Met him a couple of times.

IN: You were not.

MAEVE: Yes I was.

IN: Where and how did you find out about ACE--as in Adult Community Education? You know, just thinking back because I know you’ve been involved in it for a long time.

Think about when you got involved when it used to be Coburg.

MAEVE: Well it was my daughter that got me involved, she heard about having a volunteer organisation - a course for volunteers. Was it Moreland Adult Education?

IN: What was it like then?

MAEVE: It was very.

IN: What was it like then?

MAEVE: Because you’ve been involved longer that anyone else.

IN: When we first got started. Oh, there wasn’t a lot going then in those days, it was just a volunteer sort of organisation and they were a bit haphazard about what they were offering. I thought.

MAEVE: They were just starting out and they knew - they had great ideas. There was Paul and other people, Sue, involved. It was just teaching people, like doing little voluntary classes of two or one-on-one and even though there wasn’t, you didn’t have the stuff to be able to tell them what. You didn’t have things to work with a lot in those days or any
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MAEVE: They were all about my age in their forties and fifties.

IN: And the other volunteers, how would you have described them in terms of, maybe ethnicity, age or whatever?

MAEVE: They were all about my age in their forties and fifties.

IN: At the time.

MAEVE: People on the committee were and people on the - yeah. About around my age. I don’t think we had a lot of young people involved.

IN: And what about other languages?

MAEVE: We didn’t have very many languages. No, we sort of had the odd - no, not actually on the committee or anything.

IN: Yes, I thought that. I’ve noticed on the wall it’s got, in the old building, it had Red Cross activities associated. Did you ever do that?

MAEVE: Yes I did. Reen [Irene/Rene Peerman] was our Secretary on the Committee and she was a Red Cross fanatical woman. She had me going round doing house-to-house taking up the collection. I got some very odd people in Pascoe. They were sure I was some sort of strange -

IN: So it was like a charitable act?

MAEVE: Yes I did that. She did a lot of work for them. I remember one man pushing me out under the light to make sure, he thought I was some strange religion. I had to keep saying “It’s the Red Cross”. He said “Show me”. He took me out under this light and it was ……. even Pascoe Vale South was a bit.

IN: Yes, it was interesting you used the word religion. Do you feel it was more tied up with that sort of an activity than anything else?

MAEVE: No

IN: Do-gooding?

MAEVE: No, well she was involved in the local Baptist or Uniting Church, I think, so I don’t know whether she did that through the church or she took it on herself.

IN: I went to her funeral after she died. I went to the Uniting Church funeral.

IN: Nice funeral I believe.

MAEVE: No. No.

IN: I’ve always wondered.

MAEVE: Yes, it was OK, but there was a bit of ill feeling towards an ex-partner or partner.

IN: There’s always that.

IN: How would you describe ACE now?

MAEVE: What, Moreland Adult Education.
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IN: Yes now, just let it all hang out.

MAEVE: Well it's totally different now. It seems to be, you know, we’re involved with a lot of other organisations now, RMIT and other people. Migrant organisations and things and we take on a lot of these. A lot well most of the influence is migrant, we don’t have a lot of the native speaking people that need to read and write. We used to have a lot more of that. It seems to be mostly migrant people or people who are long term people who’ve been from other countries, ESL, English Second Language people. There’s a lot more people now, a lot of new people.

IN: As in numbers?

MAEVE: Numbers. Like teaching staff and admin. staff.

IN: Turnover you mean or numbers.

MAEVE: More people who are working for us now than we used to have.

IN: So that’s numbers?

MAEVE: Numbers, there’s a lot more paperwork. People don’t seem to connect to each other as well. They might in some areas but maybe they don’t connect in other areas. That’s a workplace thing, I think with every workplace.

IN: Everywhere?

IN: Do you think it better or worse, if you have to sort of make a comparison or in what way?

MAEVE: I really not there enough to be able to compare it. That’s the only connection I have with it now is the three hours on Friday so I can’t really say that it gives me much of an idea. It’s just that there’s more people, more of a turnover. Is that what you’re saying? And their migrant background?

IN: Yes. A different mix of people.

IN: Yes.

MAEVE: And I don’t know whether it’s - I can’t judge the place on the little time I’m there I don’t think. It’s just that I feel there’s not the connection sometimes that there used to be, but then that’s.

IN: As a community.

MAEVE: Yes. Not such a community feel about it.

IN: Yes OK.

MAEVE: I’ve had to describe a TAFE occasionally. A TAFE is sort of an intermediate sort of a place that’s not quite a university and it’s for people who don’t quite want to go somewhere else tertiary level but haven’t got - Oh and sometimes it can be a bridge between into a university because if they do well at TAFE they can go. I just tell them it’s sort of a college that’s fees aren’t very high. Sometimes if you’re on a pension the fees are nothing at all hardly and you can get in to do a lot of other stuff that will take

Comment [IN1986]: Change-MAE totally different now
Comment [IN1987]: ESL not literacy
Comment [IN1988]: Change-more people
Comment [IN1989]: Change-more workers
Comment [IN1990]: Change-more people working
Comment [IN1991]: Change-a lot more paperwork
Comment [IN1992]: Change-people not as connected
Comment [IN1993]: ACE-different mix of people ( ESL)
Comment [IN1994]: ACE-not as connected
Comment [IN1995]: Community-less
Comment [IN1996]: TAFE-intermediate, a bridge to university
Comment [IN1997]: TAFE fees aren’t as high as Unis
you on to a university if you want to go or fill in whatever course you want to do there. There’s a lot of workplace courses I think there, workplace courses.

IN: And how would you describe ACE? If I said to you someone wants to know about ACE. How would you describe it now, what happens or what it’s like?

MAEVE: Well that’s another bridge too isn’t it, for the same thing.

IN: So do you think they’re similar or different?

MAEVE: Similar.

IN: Similar?

MAEVE: Well it is sort of the same thing.

IN: Thank you. What do you like about ACE?

MAEVE: Well I suppose it’s for closer community. It’s for people who - probably it’s better for people who get intimidated by being in large classrooms and that.

IN: So do you think they’re similar or different?

MAEVE: Similar.

IN: Similar?

MAEVE: Well it is sort of the same thing.

IN: And what don’t you like about ACE?

MAEVE: Oh I think it’s good. Maybe there could be sort of - I find the classroom and class sizes aren’t very big and the people don’t want to come and they all ring up and say they have to belong to everything and they don’t go on with it sometimes. Well they aren’t quite sure what they want.

IN: Yeah. I see what you mean. They ask very general questions.

MAEVE: They don’t really know what they want to do.

IN: They just want to do something. No direction.

MAEVE: Find us something or whatever it is and it’s not that anymore. You just can’t come to fill in time or enjoy yourself or have a cup of tea or talk about the weather. It’s not like a book club or something. They’ve got to go on do things that are in a curriculum that makes them want to go on to another level.

IN: Do you think it’s always been like that?

MAEVE: No. Something we sort - even like with VCE Year 11 levels you could still find that people could fit in more you know. They could do - now I think you have to be more structured. I’m using that word a lot.

IN: Where do you think that’s coming from?

MAEVE: Oh it’s probably coming from the Adult Education Department, I should imagine.

IN: So it’s sort of funding related?

MAEVE: Yeah, funding related. You’ve got to do that, you’ve got to have the numbers, you’ve got to have the results or you don’t get funded.
IN: Exactly. Yeah. Do you see a need for ACE in the future?

Maeve: Yes I do. I’d like to see it change back more to a more user friendly sort of people you know, so people could feel less intimidated. Because sometimes people get intimidated easily. And the people we used to have, and I’m going back to the classes where we had young men from work and boys and everybody. They were there for a - well I think they would be more intimidated by some of the situations now, you know.

IN: Yes. Yes. So there’s less emphasis on the community and more on getting through a course’s structure.

Maeve: On the community spirit and more on getting through courses, proper curriculums you have to do.

IN: OK. Now you’re one of the very few people in the entire world, Maeve, who’s been a student, a volunteer, a committee member, a staff member and you’ve also done the Diploma of Further Ed., so can I ask you a few more questions about those?

What have you studied in ACE, as a student?

Maeve: Everything. I’ve done a lot of Year 11 subjects. Do I have to go through them all?

IN: No. No. Not all the subjects, just - I know you’ve done Year 11.

Maeve: I did a pre-VCE thing we used to do beforehand and then I went in, we did the pre one then other sort of classes and then we did a lot of Unit 1 VCE.

IN: Yeah. Yeah. OK and, oh there was the women’s group. You were in the women’s group. Can you remember the women’s group?

Maeve: Oh, women’s group originally. There was a lot of little groups there for a while wasn’t there? But there was that pre sort of one with Liz we did wasn’t it.

IN: That’s right. Writing.

Maeve: There was that one with Liz. We sort of got ourselves together for VCE and that was quite nice, your preparation for it.

IN: Yes. Why did you choose ACE and not TAFE?

Maeve: Cause I was already involved in it really

IN: OK, as a volunteer and a committee member?

Maeve: It just sort of went along with everything I did.

IN: I’ve probably touched on this before but do you think the courses now are different or the same as when you started studying ACE?

Maeve: VCE would be. VCE would be the same everywhere. They’ve changed a lot, haven’t they?

IN: Yeah.

Maeve: When it was HSC and became VCE. It changed again since I did it.

IN: Yeah. OK.

Maeve: Only difference is whatever the curriculum has changed a bit but I haven’t sort of done it for a while so don’t know how it is now.
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IN: How it is. Well I’ve sort of asked you the other questions about changes. I’ve got a question on change which you’ve already given me an answer to and it also - if you’ve gone to a TAFE or a university as well as ACE, are there differences. You’ve probably covered them but you went to the CAE too didn’t you for a short time?

MAEVE: I didn’t actually join up. Got into it. I got into the Diploma of Liberal Arts but I found that because of my financial situation and traveling and everything else. My health as well made a difference to me going.

IN: Yes, you had major health problems for a while there didn’t you?

MAEVE: Yes and it was the time I had another operation. So I couldn’t ‘cause I wasn’t sure when I had to have the operation and I couldn’t start the classes. Though it was a long course part-time and it was expensive for me because I was very low financially. To go in and out of the city.

IN: Yes.

MAEVE: Then you’d have to have coffee and you’d have to have clothes and then it was another - after a few years you had to go over to Footscray to finish the course to Victoria University.

IN: Oh, did you?

MAEVE: It was a long course even part-time.

IN: Yes, it was pretty - its quite a demanding course. So you couldn’t negotiate around it like you can here?

MAEVE: No. You couldn’t because it was a - you had to do - like you couldn’t do everything in one day you had to come back and do the computer. Everybody had to be computer literate quite well and that meant you had to start on your other subjects …. It took in a lot of subjects, law and literacy - literature I mean - law and literature and a lot of things, sociology and things like that, politics.

IN: And how long have you been on the committee or doing volunteering? What year would you say it started?

MAEVE: I was trying to think the other day. I think it was about ’84, ’83-’84.

IN: That would be right. I think the first documents here.

MAEVE: They were already started when I came.

IN: I think ‘81. I found some things written down.

MAEVE: It must have been about ’84.

IN: Preliminary meetings in ’81. Yeah.

MAEVE: About ’84.

IN: OK and you’ve got involved. You’ve already told me why you got involved, and what sort of activities have you done as a volunteer or a committee member. Well you did say about Red Cross.

MAEVE: That was in the early days. I don’t know if that was only because I was friends with Reen or she wanted me to do it because of work. I’ve done a lot of things.
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IN: I know.

MAEVE: I’ve done - I’ve helped out in a lot of classes. I used, when a teacher was away, I used
to try and help out in class. And I’ve done cooking classes up the little, the little house
in Coburg. And then I helped out in a very interesting class with Liz down in
Nicholson house.

IN: Yes as a classroom assistant.

MAEVE: Yes, something like. With oh what’s her name that poor woman.

IN: Which one?

MAEVE: I can’t think of any.

IN: Marjorie?

MAEVE: No. No. No. I did things with Marjorie too and I did different things and book launches
and things.

IN: Oh I know.

MAEVE: I helped out and did flower arranging and lots of stuff. No, she lives down on M
Road. She’s been ringing you up. I can’t think of her name.

IN: Ringing me up, C?

MAEVE: C. I did a class with her too, different little things, different classes.

IN: One-to-one, you did one-to-one?

MAEVE: One-to-one. Yes.

IN: You had one-to-one students and you were matched with them in the early days.

MAEVE: And later on.

IN: And that’s a story in its self, obviously.

MAEVE: Oh, very interesting.

IN: Yeah. And there isn’t much of that happening anymore, you’ve noticed that. Do you
think that’s good or bad?

MAEVE: No. No. Sometimes I think there’s a need for it because we have a lot of people ask,
when I’m on the phone, whether they could have one-to-one. It’s obviously what they
want, they can’t work out what they want or where they want to go or they can’t come
to class or they can only come two hours a week at a certain time.

IN: And why do you think it’s not happening anymore?

MAEVE: I don’t know. Maybe people because of the new insurance laws and that. You can’t
really go to their homes and that’s what they want you to do sometimes.

People, sometimes people are willing ‘cause a lot of people ring up and want to be
volunteers too. I don’t know why.

IN: Do you think it was good?

MAEVE: I think it served a purpose.
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IN: Yes, that’s good.

MAEVE: I think people enjoyed it and there was always that person that would feel happy - they
want that more intense sort of work and you can’t always get it in a classroom, can you?

IN: You can’t always, no.

MAEVE: I mean, I need someone who’ll stand over me with a computer and thrash me. That’s
why poor M down the other place - you couldn’t afford it.

IN: OK. Why do you think people come as volunteers. You could say then and now.

MAEVE: Well they probably have a need to have a communication with somebody else. Need to
do something because the society thinks they’re doing well and just to meet people or
find they’ve got a skill they want to pass on.

IN: So they come for various reasons.

MAEVE: Yeah.

IN: Yeah. There’s an old saying ‘Volunteers are for free but not for nothing’. Do you think
that’s true?

MAEVE: True. It’s hard sometimes ‘cause you’ve got to match them with the right people and
they don’t always come with the same - they want to be volunteers but they want to be
volunteers on their own terms.

IN: Yes. Yes. No. I agree.

MAEVE: And they’re not always easy to train or they don’t like the people they’re with or the
people don’t like them. It’s hard to get that mix.

IN: Yes. Yes. I agree.

MAEVE: Everybody’s not going to come, like people with PhDs or old tutors or lecturers that want
to do a bit of work.

IN: That’s true. I’ve got here, why did you work in ACE? But I know that you know
because you’ve already answered it. And you’ve never worked in a TAFE or university
at all?

MAEVE: No. Oh I worked in the Melbourne University only for a short time, a few days.

IN: In what capacity?

MAEVE: Oh, just helping out in the office.

IN: Yes. And it wasn’t related to anything you’d ever done in ACE or anything?

MAEVE: No. It was just something a person gave me a job to do because she felt sorry for me I
think and found a position for me. She worked there herself.

IN: What about the differences?

MAEVE: Well I didn’t go into the - I mean I went down to get my lunch at the Union Hall once
and the fellow said ‘Let’s all go up to Lygon Street’, I said ‘I’m only working in the
office. I’m pretty hungry going up to Lygon Street’. He said ‘Do you want to come up’
and I thought ‘I don’t know if I belong here’.

IN: So there was a sense of being out of place.
MAEVE: I like the Melbourne University. It’s very nice to walk around there.

IN: But you didn’t feel at home there?

MAEVE: Oh yes, I felt at home there but I didn’t think I was. Once when I was young my mother sent me for an exam there, which I failed miserably, for the public service or something. I never got over that.

What’s that big building where everyone went and did exams in. You know the one, a sort of famous one. I can see it sitting there looking at me.

IN: What would you say have been the biggest influences on the ACE sector since you started?

MAEVE: Oh, I suppose you. Really the way it changed.

IN: Thank you. Was that negative or positive?

MAEVE: No. I mean though it’s changed completely from the start and you’re going after funding and changing it and doing it. It must have, we’ve gone from one room to three, like two places with lots of rooms and involved with a lot of other people, a lot of other organisations.

IN: Can you suggest anything for improving ACE? Does anything pop into your head, no?

MAEVE: No. I can’t think of anything, we’ve sort of got everything set up. We could maybe advertise a bit more. I don’t know. Because people still ring up asking strange questions.

IN: Do you think people know what ACE is?

MAEVE: No.

IN: No. Yes?

MAEVE: A lot of people don’t know what community houses are either, you sort of, they don’t understand. I don’t think they advertise either of them enough.

IN: Why do you think though that people don’t understand what it is? I mean if you said a TAFE they’d know what that is. But if you said ACE?

MAEVE: Yes they’d know. I don’t know why they don’t know. Don’t do enough big publicity because you’ve got to think TAFE do a huge publicity like, advertising and that.

IN: Yes. Yes.

MAEVE: And I don’t know whether they think it reaches the right people.

IN: Yes.

MAEVE: You know, some look for and they think, oh well, that’s not really going to school.

IN: Up the local venue.

MAEVE: I don’t know because people don’t all know about it because I talk to different people and they didn’t know that we had it.

IN: We existed. Yes. Yes.

MJC
MAEVE: I was talking to a woman this week, my cousin that lives in West Coburg and her friend lives in East Brunswick not far from Brunswick Road, she must be going to do computer. She said she’s going up and doing her computer classes in De Carle Street and I said it’s up Warr Park ‘cause that’s where Brunswick have their computers.

IN: I grew up around the corner from Warr Park.

MAEVE: Yes. There was a bit of contention there, with Nicholson House I mean. So she’s gonna go up and there’s a lot of places even around Coburg and that. I don’t think they know what’s going on.

IN: So that’s a local issue but the actual ACE …

MAEVE: No. I know a lot of people I’ve known over the different ones I’ve known through other people have gone to different ones at Box Hill and Community Houses and done things, got their VCEs.

IN: Yeah.

MAEVE: A lot of people are really big in the computers things. They’re inclined to stick with that. They don’t know that there’s other levels to go to.

IN: So they think it’s learning computers, technology?

MAEVE: They don’t understand about VCE and stuff like that. I have to explain Diploma of Further Ed to everybody.

IN: Oh, you did Diploma of Further Ed.

MAEVE: I’ve explained that to my friend whose grandson doesn’t know where he wants to go and I said ‘well maybe he could do something like that’.

IN: Twelve months, OK. And how did you find out about it?

MAEVE: I just saw it when I was in the office. I saw it advertised.

IN: Internally?

MAEVE: Yeah, about twelve months. That was all.

IN: Twelve months, OK. And how did you find out about it?

MAEVE: I just saw it when I was in the office. I saw it advertised.

IN: Internally?

MAEVE: Yes, internally.

IN: OK. Is the course different or the same to any other?

MAEVE: No, it’s different, it’s more, it’s easier I think and it’s always … (end side one)

MAEVE: ………. book form ……. And you don’t have to get a lot of help with it. Like individual help with it. It’s not worth the classroom thing.

IN: No. It’s called a mentored course. And you think that’s how it works? OK. Do you think it’s more like an ACE course or a TAFE course?

MAEVE: Oh, it’s more like an ACE course.

IN: Is that how you would see it? As a TAFE or an ACE course?

MAEVE: No, an ACE course.

IN: Yes. Why?
MAEVE: Don’t know. It’s not for big venues, like for a large room and TAFE don’t have small venues normally. They always have big classrooms, or the ones I went were always fairly big classrooms.

IN: Yes. OK. Do you think the course has a future?

MAEVE: Yes, I think it’s very good. I think it’s meant for a lot of people that can’t, that push at year 11 and 12 and find it very hard.

IN: Yeah.

MAEVE: And people who want to come back to study, get into college or university.

IN: OK. If you could change that course what would you suggest? Anything?

MAEVE: Probably a bit more writing I think, a little bit more writing. You know like really good writing, not just scribbling things down notes on little bits of paper.

IN: Taking notes.

MAEVE: Like a proper good essay. I think essay writing is very important. There’s an art in that and it’s not everybody can grasp that.

IN: Yes. Yes.

MAEVE: They can grasp most of it and then when you go to universities or big colleges you do have to write essays. I think it’s important.

IN: I think it’s probably moved a bit that way in the last year or two.

MAEVE: Yes.

IN: And people have reported back when they got in and you asked them you know, cause we track it a bit, ‘where did you go with it and what did you do?’ They often say ‘I need a bit more practice in something’ like ‘I would have liked to have known how to do a case study’. Another one said an oral presentation, a couple have said ‘I really needed more practice in essay writing’ and that’s across the range.

MAEVE: They’re very big in universities on doing essays and even at TAFE on your bibliography and stuff like that, which is probably hard for people to grasp. You’ve really got to go over that.

IN: Yeah. Yes.

MAEVE: I mean I found when I had W [English teacher at Kangan TAFE] and he was an old stick and old. He was like, learnt it bit by bit on that bibliography thing.

IN: And that’s the sort of thing it needs?

MAEVE: You know and all, doing your front pages and everything. Everything has to be exactly right.

IN: Yes. Oh, that’s really good.

MAEVE: And in universities I think they’re really demanding.

IN: They want cover sheets.

MAEVE: Cover sheets and all that. I don’t know if they do cover sheets anymore.
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IN: No, that’s good. Thank you for that. Is there anything else you’d like to comment on with ACE, change, people?

MAEVE: No. I think everybody’s, you know, pretty good. We still seem to be attracting people; maybe we don’t attract people - the right people. It’s not a very good thing to say but you know, I don’t know whether it needs a bit more publicity. That’s for everywhere, that’s for all community places.

IN: No, it’s local as well, I can see that, yeah. And also on the bigger picture you mean for ACE?

MAEVE: ’Cause even though - I work on a Friday when people ring up and I tell them about other things we do and they’re amazed and surprised that we offer that.

IN: Yes. What we do. That’s interesting.

MAEVE: And then a man rang up, a lovely man, he was a lawyer; he had a PhD or something. But he wanted to do, he wanted to learn to be able to relate, and write and talk English better. And I told him, I said I couldn’t recommend anything except he could do something like a Diploma of Further Ed. Or even if you went and did a VCE subject so you could talk with people and learn to -

IN: With people who speak English? Yes?

MAEVE: English. Because you don’t need an English class you know, obviously.

IN: Well there’s ‘English for Professional Purposes’ at a lot of places but we find people have a lot of trouble getting in or else they say the fees are too high. So if you’ve only just arrived in the country, even if you’re a professional -

MAEVE: Well that’s right. They have problems with a lot of these places ’cause it’s too expensive. I mean TAFE colleges; their courses can be pretty dear. Adult ed., CAE are very expensive, very expensive. And some people just need to - I think a lot of people need English classes. Because I go to doctors and things and Ann Maree [daughter] said the other day she went to a local doctor and he couldn’t understand, some ridiculous thing, and she didn’t say what was wrong with her, she said. And I think if you’re going to have those sort of jobs or run Post Offices, which a lot of people from other countries do, work on trams or buses, you should be able to communicate with people. Or even be on councils.

IN: Yes. You should have good - be articulate.

MAEVE: Well I’m not good with grammar or that as well as I could be, but I think you pick it up in papers on the radio. And that now the people are shocking with their - I think you know they’re putting us in together. I always think …… I’ve got to go-I’ll rearrange their sentences as they’re talking so they know.

IN: So they need a higher level of English?

MAEVE: I reckon there’s always a need to offer that to people with like on the radio and that

IN: So sort of improve your English with reading and writing?

MAEVE: Well if somebody heard you’re English. Journalists I don’t know how they get their stuff. Don’t know how they get their degrees and things, but I think people who work on radio, they have the total wrong structure of a sentence, they put the thing round the wrong way. I think you could even offer something to footballers and people like that, I think they definitely need something.
IN: Need something. Yes.

MAEVE: ……they need to know. …… I mean you could always put that out. I mean people that speak English ……. anymore.

IN: So reading, writing and speaking?

MAEVE: You see W. was going to put out a class that was running in Ivanhoe. I don’t know whatever happened to him, he went to live down the beach somewhere. And he was going to run it and called it ‘Talking Proper English’. And he was running it, not in our venue, oh, Ivanhoe or somewhere there. And he said he got a lot of people who were interested in it. You know.

IN: And you’d probably get more in this area because people don’t have an English-speaking background but they still speak English.

MAEVE: Yeah. You will get people who don’t speak English at all sometimes or can’t speak very well. Then when you get people who are sort of well educated, they don’t know, they don’t know where to go but they need that extra training to be able to communicate a bit better. It’s a communication thing really.

IN: Yes.

MAEVE: Isn’t it?

IN: Oh, definitely.

Well thank you for that Kath.

MAEVE: That’s all right love.

IN: OK.
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IN: Interview with May the 1st of the November at Coburg Library. Thank you for taking part in this May.

MAY: That’s all right.

IN: Be aware that you can turn off or refuse to answer any questions at any point. OK.

MAY: Yes.

IN: And it will be typed up and you’ll get a copy of everything. And you can delete if you want to, or you can just say you prefer me not to use your interview. OK.

MAY: Right.

IN: Can you tell me a bit about yourself, like where you were born and about your family?

MAY: Yes. I was born in Burnie, Tasmania in ‘59, which dates me a fair bit. A working class family, I guess, raised with my Dad and brother and sister and a very small town. Went to a state school, which was just down the end of the street, and the local high school. Yeah.

IN: Excellent. And what do you think helped make you the person you are now? Thinking about your childhood, you know, in terms of your personality or any experiences that you had.

MAY: I think my sort of core values, that still kind of get stronger as I get older, were really formulated I think as a result of my Dad. Being working class and being a really dead-set honest kind of bloke. For him it was like you didn’t lie, you didn’t cheat, you always did the right thing, and I think that they sit sort of with me pretty well still today. Because of the community, it was fairly sort of low socio-economic sort of community, I think I still have strong - I’m still in that sort of mind-set I think. I don’t think it would matter how much money I had, I think that’s just basically how I am. Very sort of small town.

IN: And it forms you doesn’t it?

MAY: It does. It does. No matter what else I’ve experienced since then, and I’ve kind of worked with a whole range of different people since then, I still see myself very much as that kind of person. And have those sort of values and try to pass them on to my own daughter.

IN: And do you think that’s one of the things that attracted you to ACE?

MAY: I think so. My working life right across the board has been very much in the community sort of environment from disability, and even my very first job in this way was working with unemployed people sort of way back in Tassie sort of, when I was twenty.

IN: So you’re saying it’s sort of your personality and your life experience that brought you to ACE, you think?

MAY: I think for me it was just a natural thing that was going to happen because of my values. I just have a strong social conscience and I think that I’m not the sort of person who would be drawn to - by a business environment. Working for the dollar.

IN: Yes, I understand. How did you feel growing up? Were you a confident - or a, you know, like worried about school, you know? What did you feel?
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MAY: I wasn’t overly confident, socially I wasn’t confident. I wasn’t - I was kind of never one of the ‘in’ crowd or - Always suffered from being a little bit self-conscious and not really - I’m not the sort of person who would blow my own trumpet at all and I certainly wasn’t like that growing up. And just had the normal kind of worries that a teenage girl has I suppose. But always questioned stuff. One thing, I was a bit of a rebel in some ways. And in that sort of environment when I questioned, particularly for women, why things were, I didn’t accept things that were the way they were.

IN: And how can you describe your early years of school? Any - primary, secondary, tertiary - any, any schooling you had.

MAY: **Primary** I really enjoyed. It was good I think. I didn’t have anything to compare it with I suppose. But I enjoyed it and - Yeah, it was a really positive experience for me. High school was not so positive and sort of ran off the rails a little bit I suppose, in that I didn’t - didn’t study very hard. I barely got through - just ...

IN: Do you think that was because of your background, your environment culture, family culture? It wasn’t because of literacy problems obviously, or language?

MAY: Oh no. No. It wasn’t literacy. No. No. It wasn’t any of those things. I just had a serious lack of interest in it and wasn’t kept on track. I think there wasn’t a strong culture of it at home and I didn’t have the support at home. Although I didn’t - I wasn’t held back but I didn’t have - it wasn’t a modelled for me at home, and I understand that now. I look back and understand now the importance of that. So I wasn’t pushed like ‘are you doing your homework’, ‘what’s happening at school’. Those sort of questions weren’t asked so there wasn’t - and my family, I mean my Dad went to work when he was thirteen. There wasn’t that sort of modelling, and my brother dropped out of school. My sister was excellent at school, she was really academic. But she’d left home by the time I was ten, so I just didn’t have that around me. And I just was - I found it really difficult to keep interested in it. And also I think, one part of it that I think, for girls at that time, it wasn’t pushed that it was important. I never got that - I didn’t feel I got that from school. That it was ever sort of - the boys were kind of hounded, ’you’ve got to get a traineeship or an apprenticeship’ or whatever and finish school. But girls were sort of slacking off they didn’t actually -

IN: There was still that ‘she’ll get married’ thing?

MAY: Yes. There was not that importance really placed on it, that I was aware of anyway. Maybe it was there, I just blocked it out.

IN: No. No. That’s fair enough.

Where and how did you find out about ACE? Now you know ACE is Adult Community Education. There are a number of people, even those who work in ACE say, ask that question. When I say that they say ‘what is ACE?’. Which really surprised me.

MAY: Yes. I applied for a job and I wasn’t aware then it was ACE as such. I applied for a job in Neighbourhood House and that was as important education co-ordinator. So once - when I got that then I became familiar with ACE and what it was, but it took a while to sort of really understand. I mean now ACE is a common thing, but even I can remember my first couple of years in that job ACE was not a term that was used.

IN: What would they have called it then?

MAY: It was often referred to just as ACFE.

IN: ACFE. Yes. For the funding.

MAY: It was just come from the funding. And then there was a push to start talking about ACE as an entity in itself as opposed to TAFE. And for a while there that still wasn’t - it
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 wasn’t a second language, I mean first language, to me and it wasn’t something that I was
- I’d use. But now it’s just ACE.

IN: Yes. How would you describe it, when you first got involved in ACE? How would you
describe the sector? Did it have anything defining or? -

MAY: The sector. Well again wasn’t thinking about it as ACE then. But what I know was - I
thought it was an extraordinarily different way to learn. I was really impressed with I
hadn’t studied in ACE before so I was really impressed with how supportive it was. And
that you could, that you could actually achieve the sort of levels of what the certificates
that were offered and all the same as TAFE kind of stuff, but in a completely different
environment. You could go into, for me, go into what was basically a house on a street
that looked like anyone else’s house. And go in there and actually study really sort of
high quality kind of stuff and come out with the certificate that you could also - the same
thing you could come out with at a TAFE or another environment. So, yeah.

Does that answer your question?

IN: Yes. You know, how would you have described it I was just looking at my battery
actually.

How would you describe it now? I’m looking for differences or change.

MAY: Yeah. OK. I mean, I would describe it very differently now having worked in it. And I
have studied in it in that time as well, so I have got a perspective from both points. Now
I see it as, and I know this will come up in another question later about some of the
change. But now I see it as - I think it brings with it - or maybe it’s because I’m so
entrenched in it now - but it has a whole lot more, what’s the word, credibility? I think
as providing that kind of thing. Even six years ago when I first came into it, I got a
sense that it still wasn’t really taken seriously in some forms, in some ways, by some
people, often working in higher education, further education sectors. But now I think -
but I think that’s because that’s the change in me - I think it’s a really, really excellent
way for people to attain credentials, to attain, to get back into further study or to go get
employment. I think it’s just - I don’t think there’s any better way to do it.

IN: Excellent. Would you say it’s better or worse that it used to be in any way? I know
that’s a difficult thing to pin down.

MAY: Yeah. OK. I mean, what I’ve just said, I think it’s because it actually has more credibility.
And it’s actually acknowledged by a lot higher, you know, people in funding and
ministers. And people understand what it is now. I think that in that sense it’s better for
the person who studies. And goes through the ACE sector, you know, that it’s recognised
across the board. So you know what you come out with, people understand. And
that you don’t have to sort of justify where you got your credentials from. In that way
it’s good, that’s better. But in other ways I see a change now particularly with this new
funding, round three, funding they’re offering now. I think we’re on a slippery slope to
somewhere that’s kind of a bit scary. And it depends who interprets what the funding
body say and what, and that’s the Regional Director I’m thinking of, but it depends
who’s translating, I guess, what’s been written. But I’m a bit concerned about the fact
that - on one hand we are acknowledged and understood as the one place that people
who’ve gone through whatever life experiences, and no matter what their background,
can actually re-enter study and have meaningful and real sort of pathway to employment
and further study. We’re acknowledged that we can offer that and we do that in one of
the best ways possible. But the funding, what they’re, what they’re doing and what
they’re suggesting they might do with the funding, does not translate across to that. So
I’m concerned that the rhetoric is putting out that ACE is fantastic. ACE is wonderful,
it’s the heart and sort of soul of education in our communities, but we’re not going to
fund it. We’re actually not going to fund it. We won’t fund you to work with people
with higher - who might have higher than year 12, we won’t fund you to offer certificates
at sort of II, III level. I think they’re confused about - I don’t think the people on the
funding body and at that end really have a good understanding. I think they went
through a transition period where they started to see the light and they started to
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179 understand. The penny was dropping for them. Yes, we understand what it is and we
180 understand how to fund that properly. And now they’ve made this shift and I’m
181 concerned about that because - give us two or three years down the track and we’re going
182 to be - our backs will be to the wall.

183 IN: Yes. I agree. How would you describe a TAFE to someone new to adult education? As
184 distinct from ACE.

185 MAY: From an ACE?

186 IN: Yes.

187 MAY: I think a TAFE is - as an educational institution, is a place where people can have a huge
188 amount of choice about what they want to study. They offer, because of their
189 infrastructure and the size of them, they give people an enormous amount of choice and
190 options and whatever around times and how they can study. I think for many people it
191 probably is a good way, it’s an alternative, not alternative way, but it’s a good way to
192 study and that it offers a whole lot of VET stuff, a whole lot of really good, from my
193 understanding. And many TAFEs offer a good range of options and resources and
194 support, you know, to a degree. But I think they are what they are. They are large
195 institutions, they are - they do take - they have big classes. And whilst on one hand they
196 have choice, the downside is that they’re kind of an en masse educational option. And
197 the difference with ACE - the question asked for the difference, did it?

198 IN: Yes. Yes. You’re on a roll really well.

199 MAY: The difference with ACE is - we don’t - Yes, we are smaller so we don’t have a range of
200 options at each environment. Across the sector we can offer the range, but we might
201 have to refer people on. Small providers can’t offer everything or have everything in
202 their scope. But if we do have what it is you want to study, you have smaller classes, the
203 cost is kept down and the support levels are really high. You actually get to know the
204 manager, you get to meet everyone in the environment, you’re not just a number. Your
205 chances of getting successfully through, you wouldn’t have any better chance of success
206 with the levels of support that ACE offer. And also, in certainly the ones I work in, the
207 genuine part of ACE that they offer, not just written on a paper, that this will pathway
208 you into that. There’s actually someone who will work with you right through that
209 process, which TAFEs don’t offer, can’t offer.

210 IN: Is there anything you don’t like about ACE?

211 MAY: As a workplace and as a place for people to study, there’s not much I don’t like. I think
212 that side of it’s really good. I don’t like, I guess, the resourcing levels, the funding
213 structures of the different funding bodies. We’re all responding to two or three at least,
214 main funding bodies with all different accountability structures. So that makes your job
215 a nightmare. And I don’t like the lack of security for staff, particularly for sessional
216 teachers. I don’t like that, I think that that’s a real weakness of the sector. And I think
217 it’s - it upsets me in my role now particularly. It always has that I can’t offer teachers,
218 holidays, sick leave, any of that sort of - those conditions. And I think that’s what I
219 don’t like.

220 IN: So they’re actually not paid are they, during the holidays?

221 MAY: They’re not paid for holidays, they don’t get sick leave, I can’t guarantee them
222 employment from one year to the next. Although supposedly we can for the next three
223 years. Although in fact we can’t because we could face up to a 9 or 12% cut, genuine
224 cut. I mean they say 3% a year, but that actually translates into a lot more than that. So
225 I don’t, I can’t - next year I can offer my teachers stuff, work, but the year after that, I
226 still can’t guarantee them.

227 IN: Do you see a need for ACE in the future?
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MAY: Yes.

IN: That’s good. Well you’ve already answered that one - ideas for what ACE could do to become better and obviously the sessional and staffing and all that. The next little few questions here are aimed specifically at students, and I know you’ve done some study at ACE, so I’ll ask you them.

What have you studied at ACE?

MAY: Did the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. I’ve done a couple of units of IT. I’ve done some - which is, yeah - I’ve done a few sort of hobby type courses which is sort of I guess …..

IN: And why did you choose ACE and not TAFE?

MAY: Well I work in those environments and I’m familiar with them so it was an obvious choice. Now after having studied and worked in ACE, if there was a course offered in ACE and in anywhere else, I wouldn’t go anywhere else.

IN: Good. Good. Do you think the courses are different now to when you started in ACE?

MAY: You mean what’s on offer or how they’re offered?

IN: Both or either.

MAY: Either. I think there’s a bit more scope. People have extended their scopes of registration a fair bit, to offer - to include courses that are quite current now. So, yeah.

IN: And what about the delivery? Do you think there’s any change to the delivery?

MAY: Well I’d hope. I think the delivery - certainly everyone’s responded to the AQTF, and so then they’ll always have quality assurance in all the organisations. But in responding to that, I think we’re in line with anywhere else, as far as quality and accountability and so forth. So, yeah.

IN: And as a student could you see any other changes? Are they apparent to you from a student’s perspective? Not in your other roles. If it doesn’t seem to apply or you haven’t noticed any as a student, don’t worry about it.

MAY: I my capacity as a student, maybe not. In talking to students, I think there has been.

IN: You’ve already answered those under the other questions.

MAY: And you’ve also done some volunteer or committee work in ACE. Not at Moreland but in -

MAY: At Diamond Creek.

IN: Diamond Creek. You’re on the committee there?

MAY: Yep.

IN: OK. For how long have you done volunteer or committee work in ACE?

MAY: About three and a half years.

IN: OK. Why did you get involved?

MAY: I wanted to do voluntary work. I was ready to do some voluntary work in my own community. And - but I didn’t have a lot of time and I didn’t have, certainly have time to learn a whole lot of new stuff. So I figured it made sense to me to actually volunteer within an environment that I already knew. So - and plus I had something to give back.
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It’s very rare I think that you, on our committees, that we have people who are actually from the sector. So I just felt like I understood it. I knew what the staff went through everyday so that it wouldn’t take a big leap for me to actually have to learn the committee stuff, but I didn’t have to learn the environmental -

IN: Was your geographic location important?

MAY: Oh, it was my home community, yes. So that’s what I wanted to do.

IN: OK. And what kind of activities have you done as part of this committee work?

MAY: Everything. Because I have got a background in it, I was, it seemed obvious. I worked a lot on the sort of - and obviously it’s governance, a governance issue because it’s the committee - but I did a lot of policy development, staff conditions, position descriptions, quality control things, diversity, plans, quality plans, all that kind of stuff.

That was the area that I actually -

IN: So that’s giving a business perspective to the committee?

MAY: Yeah, and strategic planning. Because they weren’t doing strategic planning when I started. And so I was pushing - we pushed a lot and got some strategic planning happening. Which was good.

IN: Was there a reason that they weren’t doing it?

MAY: I think the committee at the time, they were starting to get a couple of new people on, but they’d been there a long time. They were a bit nervous about it, the whole strategic planning. And, you know, you can’t do it because you’re not business people or whatever. They were a bit frightened about it, and they found it a bit threatening. And when some of them - when we actually went through the process, because it got us to navel gaze a fair bit, and think about what we - why we were there and so forth. And that was a bit threatening to people. So I think they - I think mostly they were probably just a bit nervous that they didn’t have the skills to do it. And in fact they did.

IN: Was there a reason why people come into ACE as volunteers? Not just for the committee but also, you know, you’ve seen the different range of things that people can do as volunteers. What do you think draws them in? What do you think they want or need?

MAY: From my experience I think the volunteers that I work with have a lot of support needs. They’re - some of them have got some amazing skills, but many of them lack confidence. They’ve had some sort of life experiences that have shattered whatever it is that’s their confidence or their ability to get out there and just get paid employment or whatever it is they want. So I think they see - they understand the levels of support and the - that there won’t be excessive demands placed on them. Some places you go to volunteer, you’re just thrown at the job and ‘you go and do that and come back when it’s done’ kind of thing. Whereas in ACE there is that understanding and we’re trainers and educators so we understand that, you know. People have a whole - you have to work individually with people and understand what their needs are before - and just extend the tasks as they develop their skills. So there’s a good sort of working philosophy amongst - in ACE organisations. That’s how we work. So volunteers get that and they come, sometimes they might not really understand, but once they come and you do sometimes end up with a culture of volunteers who don’t want to move on because the - that level of support is so great.

IN: So what you’re saying is, actually they come for something, rather than to maybe give something.

MAY: Yeah.
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IN:  Their need is greater than just their … sometimes.

MAY:  Sometimes.  Yeah, sometimes.  Although in my last bout of sort of actually interviewing
for volunteers, it was a completely different batch of volunteers.  They were, and I
actually sought volunteers on the Internet, which gave me a whole different range
because for one they were already computer savvy.  They very much had their own path
planned out and that - there were still a few in that, that were quite, you know, were
coming for a different reason.  But they were people that - the people we ended with
were
working on their Masters or their Ph.D.  that - they were academics who had no
practical work experience, twenty-three year old academics who had never worked a
day in their life.  So they’re - that’s a new breed of volunteers that are coming to ACE
because they’re actually getting some very good people skills and work experience that
will then go onto their CV along with their Ph.D. or whatever it is, and make them
really viable.

IN:  Do you think, you know, because that’s short term, that it’s more of a drain on ACE?
I’m just wondering, you know, how you see them, because short term people, you take a
lot of time skilling them, and then they leave.

MAY:  And that - but that can happen also with …

IN:  Oh, it happens with everybody.

MAY:  It happens with all of them.  But definitely - and when you’re interviewing you sort of try
and get a sense of a commitment from them.  You know, even though you say ‘Well
I know you’re looking for work’ or whatever.  But try and get a commitment for at
least three months so that drain is - the impact of that drain is lessened.  But strategically
what we had to do, in that sense, is I only work with one volunteer at a time.

IN:  It’s very intensive?

MAY:  It’s very intensive and we can’t manage it.  I interviewed ten people that time and only
took one.  And I said to all of them, ‘ I won’t be taking another person till this one
finishes’.  Because you have to be just sensible about it.

IN:  Yes.  So that’s pretty much the level that a student - you’re almost doing the same that
you would do taking a student.  To look for a volunteer who you know -

MAY:  Yes.  That’s admin. volunteers, I mean we have other volunteers in the classroom all
the time that come and go.  But you can only - you have to just.  It is a big drain on your
resources.

IN:  OK.  Thank you for that.

As a staff member why do, or did you, work in ACE?  Why do you work in ACE in your
position at the moment?  Can you give me - what are your three main reasons for
working in ACE?

MAY:  OK.  The main thing I love most about working in ACE is actually sitting down and
working with people and talking to people about what their life plans are, or what they
want to see for themselves in the future.  And actually just facilitating, helping to
facilitate that in a way to someone who’ll come in and have all these dreams or
aspirations or fears.  That you can actually be part of that, helping them sort of get
where they want to go.  That’s the main thing.  If I couldn’t do that in my job, I wouldn’t
work in ACE.

The professional staff, the other people, colleagues that I work with.  I can’t believe that
I’ve been so fortunate to work with such a professional and really highly skilled group
of people over the last few years, which has been amazing.  So the access, because of the
nature of the environment, where people come and go and some people either come and

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work sessional or that. I’ve had access to work with some amazing, amazingly different people that you wouldn’t get perhaps in other sort of environments. And what else. Certainly not the money. Another one -

IN: Well you don’t have to have three, just if three popped into your head. The two you’ve got -

MAY: The other one is actually for my own skill development. I don’t know any other job where you would do in one day, cover such a range of tasks. You’re so multi-skilled in the roles that I’ve had, in my previous roles and in this one, that in any other sector if we, and as now as managers or co-ordinators, in any other sector if you went and worked in any other sector, like you be the CEO of some great company. It’s the range of skills that you actually - even though it’s mind blowing and it kind of does you in sometimes, it makes, creates a lot of stress. It actually has given me such an amazing range of skills.

IN: Good. And have you ever worked in a TAFE or university?

MAY: No.

IN: No. What would you say had been the biggest influences on the ACE sector since you started? Thinking as a staff member, not as a student or volunteer. You know, any - pure staff member. Just name a couple of influences that you think you can see have impacted in some way.

MAY: Yep. Oh, obvious one is in my previous role, is the introduction of the AQTF. I know this is very work, very sort of dry bones stuff, but I think that whole period, that sort of twelve to eighteen months, when compliance issues became - they tightened up so much more. And you’d have to have the same compliance standards for a small ACE provider who ran two or three courses as you did for a big TAFE that had the infrastructure and resources to respond to that. That was huge, and that eventually last year is what, partly what did me in, is having to respond to all of that. Which I see on one hand was very positive. We’d all have to be, have the same quality and we have to be compliant. But I think that the lack of resourcing to support us in that, was a huge impact in the last eighteen months. I’m not saying we shouldn’t have done it. I’m saying they should have been realistic with providing some resources for us to do it. And I know a lot of, or all organisations suffered. So I think that in the last couple of years that was a huge impact. And I think I’m dead impressed with how everyone’s responded to it in the way they have.

IN: And a lot of people have left the sector, haven’t they?

MAY: Oh, yes. That’s one of the influences …. That’s been one of the influences …. And a lot of people have left the sector, haven’t they?

IN: Oh, yes. There’s been a huge change.

MAY: Oh, yes. And I certainly left my job in that capacity. That was a big part of the reason why I did. And well -

IN: That’s obviously made the biggest difference.

MAY: That’s made the biggest impact. But I think also, you know, just in our region, I think the instability in our regional office and what’s happened in that. You don’t, we didn’t realise the support we were getting from our regional office. We’d bitch about it and whatever, but I think in the last two years what’s been going on there has destabilised our whole sector in the Northern Region. And I think that we’re all very unsure and nervous and anxious. And I think that it’s actually undermined people’s confidence to operate as professional organisations. Yeah, I think that’s a huge impact.
IN: Thank you very much for your time.

MAY: You’re welcome.

IN: And you’ll get a copy of this and you can delete anything you don’t like.

MAY: Right.

IN: Thank you, May.

Finish
Interview with Mike,  11th April, 2004

IN: Interview with Mike the 11th of April 2005. Thank you Mike. You know you can stop
the tape at any time or refuse to answer my questions if you would like.

M: I do.

IN: Or make any comment. Can you tell me a bit about yourself, like where you were born
and about your family? Those sort of details.

M: Born in Western Sydney, actually Westmead, in 1955. From rather interesting
beginnings. My father was twenty-one, my mother was sixteen. And after my birth,
three or four months later, they were soon divorced. My father got custody, very
unusual at the time.

IN: Unusual in those days.

M: And my father and my grandmother, his - my paternal grandmother - became my
guardians. So for the first ten or so, twelve years of my life, I was brought up in my
grandfather’s house. Except for a brief period of time when my father remarried and I
moved into his home, with my stepsister, for about eight months. Then I returned to my
grandparents.

They were certainly influential years. My grandmother was an English lady’s
companion. Came to Australia with Lady Windemere, the woman that topped
herself when she was out here. And she stayed.

So we grew up in the rural urban fringe of Sydney. So there was very little transport.
Medium sized properties and a highly multicultural community. And it was not until
many years later when I was a teenager that I first realized the nature and extent of
racial discrimination. Because it had not been my experience.

And the family was working class when I was born, but had previously been both
middle-class and primary producers.

IN: As in farming, you mean?

M: Yes. Farming and having had a small mixed business.

IN: Oh yeah.

M: Then the depression put an end to all of that. And interesting topics I remember from
my grandfather, whenever he spoke about the depression. Or his father who lived to be
ninety-nine, so I knew my great grandfather quite well. So I grew up I think in a very, what
I considered a very rich and loving family. And I was not aware that my
grandmother was not my mother until I was about five or six.

IN: That’s fascinating. So you didn’t actually have a lot of sibling interaction there.

M: No. Because of the nature of the properties. But, of course, across the road were two
young boys my own age, one of them was my own age. And down the road, one of the
local properties, there was another young fellow who was my age too. So there were
sufficient people around.

IN: Do you think you were disadvantaged in your family circumstances? In any way that
occurs to you.

M: Not at all. I think we were disadvantaged as a community. I became very - early on I
became very acutely aware that if you didn’t have your own transport or couldn’t afford
a bus to get - or have your own bike. We were very isolated.

IN: That’s interesting. What do you think were the factors that made you the person you
are now? And the defining factors of your life, do you think?. And I know there are a
lot with adults, but sometimes you look back and you can see things stand out.

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M: I remember growing up in a household where discussion, and especially at the dinner table, was very interesting. And I learnt a lot from that. My grandmother was clearly an influence on me because she, given the time that we’re talking about, had her own car and was a post mistress at one stage. And so I had the opportunity to do a lot of travel, meet a lot of people in our local community.

IN: What was her background? Was she English, Irish, Anglo?

M: She was an English -

IN: She was actually English.

M: Yeah. Newcastle-on-Tyne. And the - my grandfather, his politics, his views on religion, were things that I remember. I don’t necessarily agree with them, but they clearly helped me form my own views.

The death of my grandmother, the remarriage of my father, were a quite tumultuous period of time for me. I had the opportunity to be adopted by my uncle, paternal uncle, and I was asked and I declined to take that option.

IN: OK.

M: So that was a -

IN: Because you wanted to stay with your father or just -

M: I wanted to stay with - I was not living with my father - I wanted to stay living with my grandfather.

IN: Oh, it was grandfather.

M: The home that I knew.

IN: Yeah. Good.

M: My grandfather’s remarriage was a significant event, because the woman he remarried was only marginally older than my father. She had three children of her own. And that presented some interesting discussions amongst the family members.

IN: So you lived with three, what would you call them, step - ?

M: Well, I always referred to her as my aunt and the three children as my cousins.

IN: Oh, right.

M: And at one point three of the four of us were at the same high school.

IN: That’s fascinating. So they were actually your father’s stepbrothers and sisters.

M: Yes.

IN: Which would make them your step uncles and aunts. Technically.

M: That’s right. Except that they were - one was the same age. And the other two were just a couple of years older.

IN: Did you get along OK with them?

M: Yes. Certainly.

IN: How old were you then?
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M: Thirteen.
IN: Oh, so you were only young. I thought you were older. Thirteen, because that’s a difficult age.
M: Except that I date my independence from that period of time. My grandfather’s second wife, Auntie Thelma as I referred to her, and I were very close. And I remember many, many years later her saying to me it took her a while to realize that when I expressed an opinion or said I was or wasn’t going to do something, I really meant it. And she found that quite confronting, that a young boy could be so firm in his views.
IN: I suppose such a varied family life had given you that, that ability perhaps.
M: Well, I certainly had to be independent.
IN: Yes.
M: From the death of my grandmother onwards.
IN: And deal with a lot of adults.
M: Yes.
IN: Some people only deal with their parents when they’re young. Don’t they, really?
M: So by the time I was - by the time I was sixteen, I pretty much answered to no-one, except myself. And the general rules and behaviors of the house that I lived in.
IN: Do you think that gave you sort of an internal ability, more like a sense of internal morality if you like?
M: Oh, I had to develop a personal code of ethics and morality very early.
IN: Yes.
M: The trouble is that in the western suburbs of Sydney of the 1960’s, we were going through the period of things like the skinheads. And many of the people that I knocked around with, were either on one side or the other of that group, of that divide. In my early years I certainly met, on more that one occasion, a policeman. Because of the things that the group that I knocked around with got up to. And for me, I was often confronted with the option of pursuing education or what we might now call delinquency.
IN: Yes.
M: And I made conscious choices on many occasions about that. I was - at high school in the top classes, but certainly not in the top ten of any particular group. But I was - I did reasonably well in that particular area. And because I was not interested in the sports that were played at school, that led me to many confrontations in the school yard. Accusations of being a sissy and a poofer and all those sorts of things. The background, my background was that I was interested in baseball, because that was the game my father played. A game that was not played in high school from that period. I was interested in ten-pin bowling, which was a game that my new cousins had introduced me to. Again a game that was not - not interested -
IN: You could if you’d lived around here, because there was a baseball club down in Carlton.
M: But Victoria is very different to New South Wales. It’s not a game that was recommended as the average, you know, ocker game in the western suburbs of Sydney.
You had either played cricket, which I liked, or you played Rugby League or Rugby Union.

M: And not soccer. Only Italian and Yugoslav children played those games. So those things were - I learnt to defend myself because of those circumstances, at an early age. But even then I realized that I was one of the few people who mixed across the whole range of backgrounds and types of people that were in high school. I was equally at home with the people that were in the, what were then called, the lower grades. Because some of them were my friends, as I was with some of the people who were in senior grades. Because they were the friends of my cousins.

M: That’s right.

IN: They’d mixed. That’s good.

Well, you’ve sort of described your early years of schooling. You went to university I know, in New South Wales. Was that what stood out about your years? That was in higher ed. That was in a university, not a TAFE, wasn’t it?

M: That’s right.

IN: Yes.

M: I had my first job at thirteen and my first serious part-time job at fifteen and a half.

IN: What did you do?

M: With Waltons, the retail company.

IN: I remember Waltons.

M: And I did well with Waltons. They encouraged me to become a management trainee and to work for them, and I got a traineeship. They - I had no intention of going to university because of the cost. Two things happened. One was that the first Labor government after many years abolished fees, and I still couldn’t afford to go. And even though I got a teachers’ college competitive scholarship, I didn’t want to be a teacher. It would have only been a means to an end. So I went to work full time and the personnel officer encouraged me to take up the degree of studies.

IN: OK.

M: And so I moved away from home, in fact I moved to the south coast, Wollongong. And Waltons kept me in work for as many hours as I could do.

IN: Oh, they were good then?

M: And I went to university.

IN: Because some of those places, you know, just won’t do that. Will they? Or support your education.

M: Well they won’t. But that was one of the early forms of traineeship and they were very serious about it. And the wonderful company, that in those days Waltons was a limited company, owned by the family essentially, and only staff could own shares in it.

IN: Oh, right.

Where and how did you find out about ACE? Now I assume there wasn’t ACE when you were young, or you didn’t come across it if there was.

M: Oh well, I didn’t know that that’s what it was called.
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IN: Or another form of it.

M: But the New South Wales system had well known evening colleges. And that was the form of ACE that I think was prevalent in those days. Many people went to evening college as well as high school or as well as working. And they - this was separate to the technical colleges. The evening colleges were run in technical colleges, but also in high schools in the evening.

IN: OK.

M: And so you could do basic book keeping, or you could do music, or you could learn photography.

IN: Like the CAE is now?

M: Like the CAE. So it was called the Workers Education Association.

IN: Oh, was it? That’s interesting.

M: In New South Wales. And so that had always been a very, very large, much larger than we have here, evening college at Liverpool Tech. College in the evening. It had a separate principal. It was run as a separate school.

IN: So it was more like the American model then, wasn’t it?

M: Yes. They just used the same buildings.

IN: Yes. That’s interesting.

M: And there was also smaller colleges around that were well known in those days. The National Arts School was still separate. So in Liverpool again there was the National Arts School up on the - near the Town Hall and next to all the major banking districts.

And it was actually that school that I first came in contact with as a student, I wanted to study music. Which I hadn’t been able to do, even though we had a piano at home, from when I was about thirteen. The piano was not the instrument that interested me.

IN: So what did you learn?

M: I started to learn the flute then. I made three different attempts to learn the flute over my years, and still can’t play the damn thing. But I have a very beautiful flute of my own sitting at home.

IN: I have a niece who plays the flute. I don’t know how well, but she learned it at school.

M: So, yes, so my first contact with that, with ACE, was in that capacity. It was well known in the community. And I was an early student when I was about fifteen, sixteen.

IN: OK. That’s interesting.

M: And I many years later, well not so many years later, when I was twenty something, I was working in Sydney for the Higher Education Board and I was secretariat for that board also provided secretariat services for the Board of Adult Education in New South Wales.

IN: OK. Because we always picture there not being much in New South Wales, because of this thing about the ACFE sector only being in Victoria. Pretty much you know, because it’s different to the other states.
M: Well, I think it’s the terminology. I don’t think - I think there is actually quite a large sector there. I just don’t think though, that it’s described in the same way. The Board of Education was extraordinarily conservative and it really was a way of just regulating what was going on, to the minimum activity. So some of the executive members of the Higher Education Board were also executive members of the Board of Adult Education and the Board of Teacher education.

IN: So it wasn’t actually quite differentiated?

M: Oh no. They were on separate floors in the one building.

IN: Yeah. There was definitely a link there.

And how would you have described it as being different? Would you have thought of it as being a different sort of a sector in those days, or just another arm of the same sort of thing?

M: Oh well, I’ve always understood what tertiary education - what sectors make up tertiary education. So simply because I once asked somebody ‘What is tertiary education?’ And they explained to me that it was higher education, or in the days they explained it to me, it was universities, colleges of advanced education, technical colleges. What was then just starting to be called TAFE. And the adult education evening colleges.

IN: Yes. What about now? How would you describe it in terms of the other sectors? Do you think it’s -

M: I think it’s invisible.

IN: … word …  So the marketing in ACE then, has gone nowhere. None of us think it has.

M: The State government agencies have done absolutely nothing to introduce the Victorian community to this third part of the tertiary sector, as a cost effective and efficient and viable alternative.

IN: Well, that’s interesting. Because you’ve got quite a broader picture of it, you know, most of us who’ve sort of seen the micro think that. That we can never get anyone to agree, you know, when you raise this in meetings, people sort of just think you’re complaining. Not that you’ve got a legitimate complaint that there’s no promotion at a higher level.

M: Well, I can - I mean I’m aware that from my previous experiences that people don’t understand it and don’t know of it, and they’re the people that should know. Let me give you examples. The university registrars, when I was a member of that group, did not know of the ACE sector. Nor did they recognize it as an admissions pathway. But they did recognize specific private providers and specific TAFE institutes. The VTAC, the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre, only started to think about ACE as a pathway, because people like myself asked how they were going to recognize these institutions for admissions purposes. The - my membership of two different regional councils, from the days when they were divisions of Further Education and Boards of Further Education, onwards. And mixing in the local community, I can assure you that local councils in the western metropolitan region of Melbourne, did not know that ACEF existed as a sector. Because as chairperson, I visited all nine of those councils to talk to them about how they would provide services and funding for that sector. As their sector of education if you like, their Department of Education level. And most of them had absolutely no idea.

IN: Most of them had no idea.

M: They knew that they were funding little Neighbourhood Houses and they knew about health - Human Services. But they did not know about the adult education.
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IN: It’s quite bizarre in a way because a lot of people have done quite a lot of spadework on that. I mean, I’ve talked to a lot of people on the council but - and we’ve been in council buildings, as you know.

M: It’s information that’s not - because it is not recognized as a formal institutionalized sector, it therefore doesn’t exist when people move on. There’s no institutional memory in the council about this. And this happened time and time again. If we were called the, let’s take this place as an example, if we were called the Moreland Community College, and we advertised as such, then we would be seen as an institution and recognized by those agencies. The question has always been, in becoming recognized as an institution, do you then unintentionally deny access to people who don’t want to go to institutions. And I recognize that dilemma. But I genuinely believe that in this particular case there isn’t a compromise. You are either one or the other.

IN: Yeah. I just wonder if we’d get support for it if we tried.

M: Well, I think there’s been no - the State government has done nothing to market ACE. What it markets is, it has meetings of people who already know about ACE. And preaching to the converted, it’s like you know, it’s like advertising in the Age for a Year 12 course. The people you’re going to attract are the people who are the grandparents of the kids in Year 12. You’re not going to attract the Year 12 kids.

IN: And you’re looking at kids that only read the Herald Sun anyway, if anything.

M: Exactly.

IN: If anything.

M: The government has also insisted that ACE behave as if it was a fully fledged sector. Yet it is community based, it doesn’t have the infrastructure. And then they wonder why no advertising occurs.

IN: Yes.

M: They’re spending it on all of these other things.

IN: Yes. Keeping up.

M: Do you think the ACE, you know now, is better, worse or the same, than the ACE you pictured say about well, twenty years ago? Ten years ago maybe.

IN: Twenty years is when I became involved in the Victorian sector.

M: Because I arrived in Victoria in 1984. And my personal views are that as a member of a community, as a citizen, I should put things back into the community in which I live. M: And so set out systematically to work out how to do that. And somebody suggested that I became involved in Further Education. As it was called in those days.

IN: So from a perspective of now, compared with say ten years ago and twenty years ago.

M: Oh I thought there was a huge shift between ’84 and ’95 say, or ’96, when - just after the legislation was first introduced into the State parliament. There was a - it was both a vibrant period within the sector, but many people knew of it, more people knew of it then. I think that’s all been dissipated, and if anything we’ve gone backwards. I think less people know about us now than they did in 1991, when the new legislation came out.
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IN: Can you think of a reason why that’s happened? I mean do you think it’s maybe - well, I don’t know. What do you think? I can suggest a few things but I just wonder if you had an idea of why do you think it’s gone backwards.

M: Well, providers simply don’t have the time nor the resources now, because of the static funding, to be able to do the community development, community building. That the government thinks that this sector should be pursuing.

IN: Yes. Or there’s such small amounts of money, you know, dribble through. A few thousand for a project that then ends. It doesn’t go anywhere, you can’t continue it.

M: Well, yes. They are all projects, they are all finite projects.

IN: That’s all.

M: Not ongoing. There’s no - there’s a lot of use of the word sustainability, but there is no sustainable change or innovation. Organizations, community organizations are lurching from one funding round or income generating period to the next.

IN: And of course, there’s been a cut over the next three years. They talk about biennial funding.

M: The cut actually occurred much earlier that this. The cut occurred when 2003, the State government capped the allocation of funding to the sector. And then each year used 2003 as the base grant. And only increased it by an arbitrary Consumer Price Index figure, not the full figure. So there was no recognition of change or growth for future infrastructure in the funding that the State government allocated to Further Education.

IN: And yet the demands have increased enormously. In terms of, you know, everything - paperwork, audits.

M: Oh their bureaucratic requirements now - the corporate requirements, because I don’t actually think bureaucracy is bad. The corporate requirements are the same for a small community based organization of volunteers with a couple of a hundred people, as it is for the university that I served for thirty or twenty odd years. There’s as much paperwork involved.

IN: Yes. It’s absurd, isn’t it?

M: How would I describe a TAFE institution?

IN: OK. How would you describe a TAFE to someone new to adult education? And how would you describe an ACE.

M: How would I describe a TAFE organization? Well, normally I describe it in terms of the types of courses. I describe TAFE as - that’s all those sub-degree courses that you can study. And covers as well as general studies. You can also do apprenticeships and business studies there. That’s how I would describe it to somebody. Of course nowadays, there are TAFE institutes with degrees and graduate diplomas. But they’re few and far between. And I have always described ACE as the community based TAFE institutes, that offer up to only diploma level. And I always add the phrase that we also offer - I’m actually having a mental block about the word that I use - the general personal development and interest courses, like ‘How to use my camera’. I tend not to describe it as it’s like the CAE, because the majority of Adult Education institutions aren’t.

IN: Aren’t. No they’re not. They may have thought that once, that’s not how they’re…. but they’re not. Are they?

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And what do you like and not like about ACE? Is there anything, any quality in ACE, that you like in some way? Just a personal or subjective view. Do you see anything in ACE that you find positive?

M: Oh yeah. They’re two different questions, aren’t they?

IN: Yeah. Exactly.

M: What do I like about ACE? I like - what I like about ACE is that there is a stronger interest in the personal development and advancement of the individual, rather than the achievement of the certification.

IN: We used to talk about empowerment, and that’s gone out a bit now. But that’s what nearly all these organizations were based on. The idea of the individual being empowered in some way. Whether it’s through being a volunteer or student or -

M: Well, I believe that the way we empower in this type of society, is to give them a certificate. I still think that in ACE, our interest is in their personal development and incidentally they would get a certificate.

IN: Yes. Yes.

M: The process and the course structure and the course itself is not the reason for our existence.

IN: No. No. That’s right.

What don’t you like?

M: I don’t like the attitude that I find prevalent in some ACE organizations, that they are separate to mainstream society.

IN: So you mean that in terms of other - well, other everything. As in other community things, other education, other. So they’re like a little island. Do you mean?

M: Yeah. They think of themselves as a little island and that money should just be handed to them. Because intuitively or intrinsically, you should be able to see the worth of what we’re doing.

IN: Right. Without -

M: And that the normal practices of good governance or business or ethics or morals don’t have to apply to us, because we are good people.

IN: I’ve seen that. I wouldn’t have thought it actually, but now you’ve said that, I can hear it.

M: And the - and that’s led to I think a second stage of we’re a ghetto. And I lived through two of those ghettos before when I was in the advanced education sector. And when TAFE was absorbed in several universities. And it’s not productive and it’s not accurate.

IN: Yes.

M: It’s not really - it’s not reality.

IN: We still hear that when we go to those RMIT meetings, you know, where they say ‘Oh well, it’s different with the higher ed. sector. But it hasn’t worked with the TAFE sector’. As though they’re two different things.

IN: Yes.

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IN: Instead of just RMIT?
M: Just a ………

IN: Can you see a need for ACE in the future?
M: Oh I think - I think that there’s an absolute need for ACE in our society. Because it is an alternative delivery method for groups of people who do not, or can’t, or won’t access the other method, the other patterns, the other sectors.

IN: And do you think that’s because it attracts more disadvantaged people or different types of people? Or there’s some other quality people are looking for in ACE or - I just want an opinion on this. What do you think?
M: I don’t think we just attract disadvantaged people.
IN: No.
M: I mean, clearly it does attract that group of people. But the other sectors have gone out of their way to try and attract those people too. It attracts people from the whole spectrum of the socio-economic milieu. Because - I think because of the issue that we were talking about, that it is a different methodology, a different philosophy. What they used to call a different paradigm. A word I absolutely hated.
IN: So did I.
M: And it and that access suits them.
IN: Yes. Do you think there’s a personality type involved in that or just - ?
M: No. Well, certainly not in the students that I deal with. No.
IN: So you don’t see -
M: I see the whole range of, you know, conventional conservative corporates, through to aging hippies. So - which is the same as what I used to see, when I was working in universities.
IN: Yes. So to make ACE better in the future, what do you think? Just a quick something that would improve it. Apart from gallons of money.
M: Well actually - you see, to me it’s not the gallons of money. To me it is the - some sense of ownership by the State government of the essential role that ACE plays in the delivery of it’s education policies and other social agendas.
IN: Yes. And that’s all tied up with that thing of marketing and sort of branding us. And all those things, in some way.
M: Well if they - you see my personal view has always been that the State government should insist that all of the ACE providers become the Department of Education in every municipal council. And that institutionalization of ACE doesn’t have to change the community based nature of them. Or that there might be multiple small institutions, But that framework will ensure its survival.
IN: So that it’s tied to the local government area, pretty much.
M: The only other alternative is that we go down the path that has been tried and true in education. And that is bigger is better. And that through some sort of process of merger and acquisition, ACE organizations become big enough to achieve critical mass.
IN: That way you can afford to have the support and that.

M: And whilst I make public speeches about both of those topics, the first one is my preferred model.

IN: Yes.

M: The second one is an alternative that would work.

IN: And people get very threatened by it.

M: Both of those.

IN: Yes. I don’t have a problem with them, but you know, I suppose like everything it depends how it happens.

I've got a few other questions here that are more special sort of areas. Anything you may, or may not, have been involved in. So as you can see, some for people with IT, some people who are involved in Learn Links, others Diploma of Further Ed., as the volunteers or a staff member. So you know, if I skip around a little bit and sort of get repetitive, that's the reason.

So have you ever studied in ACE? Now you’ve mentioned music when you were a young boy.

M: Yes.

IN: That was fifteen, sixteen. Since then - courses?

M: Well, I came back and did the Assessment and Workplace Training.

IN: OK. Is there a reason you chose ACE and not TAFE?

M: Because I had made a conscious choice, at that stage of my career, to work in community based not-for-profit. And work with them.

IN: Do you think the courses have changed now, in the last say ten years in ACE?

M: Oh yeah. They’re more highly structured.

IN: I’ve already asked you those so I’ll miss the rest of those.

And you’ve done volunteer and committee work in ACE?

M: I certainly have.

IN: I thought that. So you’ve done volunteer work as committee member or just board member?

M: Well, I was on the Footscray Community Arts Centre Board for many years. I have done some volunteer work for ……Unemployment and Education Services. I was their champion of their new …. program. And I was the patron of the Melton U3A.

IN: Melton.

M: For many years.

IN: So you’ll be able to go into it in a few years will you, just smoothly.

M: Well, I actually learnt about what was called the elderhostels in 1975. And that fascinated. Because I was the mentor for an elderly woman who came back to university.

IN: Oh, yes.
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M: I was nineteen I think, or twenty. She was considerably past retirement. And it was called the Mature Age Entry Scheme. They really meant - they weren’t talking about twenty-one in those days. And it was based on the European *elderhostel* model.

IN: Right. I’ve never heard of that, the *elderhostels*. I’ve already asked about what you did.

Do you think ACE has changed for volunteers in the years that you’ve been involved in that sort of, you know, I mean as a volunteer?

M: Gee. I don’t know how to answer that one. I think that ACE has less volunteers now than it used to.

IN: Do you think there is a reason for that? Do you think it’s -?

M: I think it’s because of the *corporatisation* of the sector, of the requirements. Volunteers, volunteers will always help out with things. But it requires people who have some expertise to be able to do the day-to-day activities now.

IN: Yes. This used to be a volunteer organization when I first started in it. That was about twenty years ago.

M: Well, one of my clients, the ……… United Sports Clubs, is one of the few almost still with volunteer run sports clubs in *New* South Wales. And it is between medium and large multi sports club. The Board of Directors still do supervisory work every night and it has the minimal, minimum amount of staff.

IN: That’s interesting, because usually there is so much demand and most volunteers think they can’t cope with that amount of demand.

M: It’s starkly uncharacteristic in the *New* South Wales sector.

IN: I can imagine it would be, because you can often get volunteers, but they want usually something fairly limited. And you can’t place to much responsibility on them, because it’s not paid. That’s why they don’t want it.

M: Well, this organization has, when I last worked for them, twenty-one different sporting codes. So that when the United part literally meant the united grouping of a variety of sports.

IN: That’s pretty unusual though isn’t it?

M: It is very unusual.

IN: Yes. Yeah. Why do you think people come to ACE as volunteers? Have you got any idea about that?

M: I don’t know that - I don’t think people come to ACE as volunteers. I think people decide that they want to *volunteer* and help out the *community*. And they start looking around for agencies that they can do that.

IN: Yes. It’s a bit different now, because in the old days they used to advertise and say, ‘Are you good at reading and writing? Would you like to help someone else read and write?’ Which was very specific.

M: And that’s precisely my point. We no longer do that.

IN: No.

M: I see in the ‘What’s On’ columns in our local newspaper once a week, a very small two centimeter column by one of the ACE providers saying, ‘Would you like to be a
Interview with Mike, 11th April, 2004

...volunteer’. I’m pretty certain that that’s probably not the way to attract a broad cross section of the community to volunteer.

IN: Yeah. OK. I’ll have to look for it. Oh, look. As a staff member I’ve got here ‘Why did, or do, you work for ACE’? Specifically. Now you’ve had other, so many other jobs, that you can actually differentiate between other jobs and ACE. What drove you into ACE?

M: OK. If you want to - I mean, it’s not a short answer. You see I was - I achieved the third level in my university educational administration career. Without a Ph.D., I was never going to be a pro vice-chancellor and therefore a vice-chancellor. And because I was not an academic, I was never going to be a vice-chancellor. So I had reached a plateau. I was the youngest Registrar in Australia, at the time that I achieved that. The working environment no longer provided me with job satisfaction. That coupled with changes in my health status led me to think about what I was going to do for the next twenty years of my life. And so I determined that I would do the things that I enjoyed. And they were almost all centred around passing on my knowledge, skills and attitudes to others. Or helping them to develop their own knowledge, skills and attitudes.

IN: And that thing where we prioritize people over courses obviously fits, fits into that.

M: And so I had always intended that post fifty-five, I would resurrect my Ph.D. studies. Which are still in the box on the cupboard, where I last put them. That prior to fifty-five, I would be working in the Further Education sector. This was a decision I made many years ago, back in the 90’s, and it just happened that it - I needed to do it earlier rather than later.

IN: That few years. Yes.

M: It was about three years earlier than I planned.

IN: Yeah. So are you still planning on going back.

M: To?

IN: Study.

M: Oh absolutely. I’ve got no -

IN: Yes. That’s good.

M: I always intended, I mean, I always promised that, though some of my colleges saw it as a threat, that I would come back as one of their students.

IN: That would give them the horrors.

M: And I have every intention of doing that because I see that as a quality activity to pursue. Amongst others.

IN: Yeah. Yeah.

M: When I’m no longer working full time.

IN: Yeah. And when you said your health status had changed, we were talking about a major change in your life.

M: Yeah. Yeah.

IN: We were talking about a major change?
Interview with Mike, 11th April, 2004

M: I was identified, I had blood pressure since I was twenty-one. And in the middle of the 90’s, 95-96, my coronary arterial disease was diagnosed. So that by the time 2000 came around, I opted for elective by-pass surgery. Rather than waiting for what all of my medical friends and my professional medical advisors said, was an inevitable heart attack. As it turned out I’d clearly had a form of stroke. I can’t remember what the initials stand for, a TIA form of. Which results in small pinprick sized holes in the brain that disconnect your memory. So I have short-term memory problems.

IN: The rest of us are all just getting old and have something similar.

M: But mine occurred before that phase. Now I can say - I might be able to use that excuse now.

IN: You can use that now and say ‘that was a senior’s moment’.

M: But I went from a person who was almost photographic memory. So it was very obvious to everyone and especially myself. And the diagnosis of that is quite an intrusive operation, you know. So it’s theoretical, I won’t let them do the operation.

IN: To have another look at you.

M: Well, you have to go into the brain to, and I won’t do it.

IN: Will you wait till it gets a lot worse?

M: I won’t do that one.

IN: Yes. No. I can understand that. Yes. It’s just interesting because I can tell you that when I’ve talked to a lot of people, a lot of them have had some sort of a hiatus in their life at some point. Now it can be a health thing, you know, we’ve had a couple of cancers and things. Others have had very traumatic family breakdowns where they lost their confidence and all those things.

M: Mine certainly - strangely enough I don’t believe mine was my health or work. The absolutely toxic working environment that I was immersed in within the then university, had dozens of us off on sick leave and leaving and enormous amounts of problems. The out-placement employment services was full time at the university.

IN: You’d think they’d know there was something bad going on, you know.

M: Yes. So that was the critical thing. I said in my farewell speech that I was being asked to do things that I no longer was prepared to do.

IN: I can understand that.

M: Do you think ACE is under any pressure to change? And if so, where from? If yes.

IN: Do you think in doing so, they’d be throwing out the better part?

M: Yes. It is under pressure to change. It is under pressure to change from the government agencies to behave more like other sectors of education.

IN: Do you think there’s some overlap. Of course there’s some competition. But as soon as you make them - would homogenous be the right word - as soon as you make them identical.

IN: The rest of us are all just getting old and have something similar.

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Interview with Mike, 11th April, 2004

IN: Yes. You’ve lost that.
M: You’ve lost that advantage to the community.
IN: Yes. That diversity.
M: That diversity.
IN: Yes. OK. Well, you’re not involved with Learn Links. Be grateful. But you do understand about the Diploma of Further Ed. As much as anybody in the State does.
M: Understand might be overstating it.
IN: And you’re involved in it as one of the mentors. And that’s been for how long now? About how long?
M: Oh we’re getting close to - we’ve passed six months. I’d say.
IN: Yes. And I was going to ask you how you found out about it. But obviously you found out about it through Moreland. Did you know about it before that?
M: I knew about the Further Education when the course was created, because I was on the Western Region Council in those days. And I knew about the Liberal Arts course, because one of the key people involved in that was Victoria University, one of my colleagues.
IN: Yes.
M: So I knew about these two courses.
IN: Well, most people seem to have caught up with the Liberal Arts, that has a higher profile. And I know it was huge in the CAE, it’s still is quite big. And they came out to see us and they felt that it suited their method more, whereas we went with the other one because we thought it suited ours. Because the emphasis was less on humanities.
M: Yes.
IN: And more on a wider spread.
M: Well, I think, I think the way we deliver it here is very much an ACFE model. I think the course structure is unfortunately very VET, very. The second half of the course requires an enormous allocation of study, to unspecified hours of further study at the certificate or the diploma level. For simply the sake of having these contact hours ticked off.
IN: Yes.
M: Obviously they could be related. But the structure makes no pretense that they have to be relevant at all.
IN: So you know -
M: It’s just a structure, isn’t it?
IN: It’s like the IT. And, you know, you may never have to use a database or a spreadsheet if you’re a humanity student just needing -
Interview with Mike, 11th April, 2004

M: Well nowadays I can’t -

IN: Well, a few you would, but it shouldn’t really be to that level.

M: No. So I think you’ve got these, you’ve got these two major units that are under allocated in hours. And then you’ve got these other units, these other unspecified unit hours. Just because somebody somewhere decided that a Certificate IV has to have X number of hours. You know, two hundred and fifty hours. The diplomas has to have, you know, three hundred and sixty hours or five hundred hours or something.

IN: Whatever. Well, we could have allocated more hours to the delivery of it. But we found people couldn’t attend.

M: No. But your question was?

IN: About which model it is. More an ACE or a -

M: Yes. So it’s an ACE model, but it’s within a classic technical structure.

IN: Yes. I guess that’s because it was developed through RMIT.

M: Well, actually what it reminded me of was the days when I worked in the teachers colleges and the agricultural colleges. That were becoming colleges of advanced education. And in essence the people who were leading curriculum development were former secondary teachers.

IN: Yes.

M: And they believed the only way you could learn is if you had student contact hours.

IN: Yes.

M: If you were in a classroom.

IN: Face to face.

M: And I’m teaching you.

IN: Yes.

M: And that’s classically how the structures have all emerged. And that’s not about the way a mentor operates in an ACE.

IN: No. No. We try and break that down as you know but - Yeah. You can see it’s still there. Do you think the course has a future?

M: Yeah. I do. I think it has a very strong future. It’s a pity that more people don’t know about it.

IN: So no one ever promoted it. And they never published the resource booklet, because they didn’t think there was a market for it. Just as a matter of interest. If you could change the course, how would you do it? Change like the VET feel of it? Or change the performance criteria? Or?

M: I would split the - what’s it called - reflection and learning practice or whatever.

IN: Reflective Learning and Planning. For all units?

M: I would split them into slightly different groupings. So instead of 1A and 1B, I’d have 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D. Because I can see that you could then develop some of the things that
are within those subjects now. I think there’s an awful lot within those two subjects or
those two units, I mean the Cert. IV for example, that would benefit by taking away
some of these wasted hours. You know, having somebody doing another subject, out of
another diploma.

IN: Yes.

M: But still, at the end of the day, if this is a pathway to something else, then my interest
would be in trying to work out what the individual skill, knowledge and attitude -
attitudes were that the student needed to know. And package that.

IN: So that’s like, you know, you could do them an RPL and then, and planning around that,
what more they need.

M: Well, I think the structure needs to allow for individualized learning plans if I can use
that terminology. Rather than ‘This is the stuff we’ve got to cover and be covered’. Now I have the benefit of seeing both the way you deliver it and the way Heather
obviously intended to deliver it. And I think the students would benefit by - a
combination of both. That there is some structure before they then go off and become
individualized. That would be the way I would change it.

IN: Good. Good. You can take that on anytime. All those checklists.

M: Well, the checklists are only because of the bureaucracy.

IN: I understand that. Yeah. No. It’s quite true.

M: Whereas if you think about the content of that course, where you want somebody to
develop certain skills, that they will need for either going into business or going on to
 tertiary study. Then you would want to say ‘Well, OK let’s work out where you’re at
with your numeracy skills, your IT skills, things like that. OK, that’s where you’re at
now. You want to go this path so you need to build them in this way’. But the way the
course is structured at the moment is that those IT skills and those numeracy skills, for
example, are blended in almost coincidentally.

IN: Although in the past when we’ve had people who were emphasizing their IT, we’ve
arranged for them to do specifically IT work. And we do say, networking in a bit of
something, as well as involving them in RMIT- some units. So you can sort of do that.
It’s a bit more difficult with people wanting to do similar things, or else not being able
to quite find out what they want to do in something vaguely humanities. You know, you’ve sort of got to do some fairly generic stuff. Anyway we’ll follow this another
time.

M: Yeah.

IN: And a few hours here and there and a bit of homework.

M: And what do we need to achieve in a term or a six month, or a year block for that person,
given that we’ve got, you know, 120 hours. Because that’s all they’re going to devote to
it.
Interview with Mike, 11th April, 2004

IN: Yes. I agree. It’s definitely, you’d say, more secondary model though.

M: I think all of these course structures, even the university structures, are secondary.

IN: Yes. Based on secondary. Yes. That’s very interesting.

Well, have you got any other comments, or anything you’d like to discuss, or talk about?

I think you can see where I was heading with some of the questions.

M: Yes. I always feel quite passionate, that’s one of the reasons why my outspokenness still gets overlooked, and I’m still invited to ACE functions. Because I think that people who are committed to community development, for want of a better word, community building, as they call it now. Is - I think, those people are always going to be respected. I think ACE is the education sector that supports community development.

IN: Yes.

M: Community advancement.

IN: Yeah. That’s good, because that differentiates it in that way. Doesn’t it?

M: Well, I mean, I’ve read a lot of these books about, you know, what’s the essence of a university. Well in Newman’s ‘Essence of a University’, was to produce educated gentlemen was the phrase that he used. What he meant was civilized educated citizens was what he meant for that. And the – whether it’s vocational or for personal development, it was about the advancement of knowledge. Sometimes it could be applied, sometimes it wasn’t. Well, I’m still interested in what we can do in ACE about the advancement of knowledge for an individual. Now for that individual, it might be learning how to spell or write their own name. Or it might be, as we can do nowadays, it might be a Graduate Certificate in Project Management. Because that’s what they want to do.

IN: It’s very much based on the individual needs though.

M: Yes. ACE is about student-centred learning.

IN: Yeah.

M: Whereas the other sectors pretend that you can do student-centred learning.

IN: I like that. I think that’s a good definition. I like that. Yeah. That’s good. Well, thank you for that. And if I want to ask you anything else, you don’t mind another time?

M: No. I’m happy, I’m happy the probability that you’ll find another time is pure pipe dream.

IN: Well, thank you anyway.

M: Good.

Finish
Interview with Neen 13th December 2004

IN: Interview with Janeen Gronbeck the 13th of the 12th 2004.

Janeen, you know you can stop the interview at any time by either pressing that or just saying ‘no’. You don’t have to answer any question at all. You’ll get a transcript afterwards and you can have anything deleted you would like on it. And I will never refer to you in person. OK. Is that OK? Are you OK about that?

NEEN: Yes. Fine.

IN: Right. Can you tell me a bit about yourself, like where you were born and about your family?

NEEN: Well, the youngest of three children. I was born in Glenroy, still live in Glenroy. My brother is fifty-five, my sister is fifty-four. Nine years later my parents decided to have me, which was a big boo-boo. Which started the whole street going after that. They’ve done a variety of jobs. Mum was a housewife most of the time.

IN: Good. So you’ve got two siblings.

NEEN: Yes.

IN: And do you think having siblings made a difference to you life?

NEEN: Yeah. I think you’d be very lonely if you were an only child. Who would you fight with? They all said I was spoilt. Being the youngest I got away with a lot more than they ever did. Bit more freedom.

IN: Good. OK. What do you think helped make you the person you are now? Just looking back over your life. Like your personality, your experiences, anything that happened to you.

NEEN: The openness of my family, being able to talk about anything. Lots of laughter. Communication was good at home. Family life was pretty good at home. I think that’s a help with family unit. Not like it is nowadays where they’re breaking up all the time and you’re losing mothers or fathers and everything else. Having someone to go to. Helping each other out. Even though you might fight with brothers and sisters, but they’re always there for each other.

IN: Good. So there were no dramas that you feel impacted on your life in any way?

NEEN: Well, no. No.

IN: You know, relationships all those sorts of things.

NEEN: No. ……….

IN: What about as you were growing up or as you were an adult.

NEEN: Well I went to Pascoe Vale Girls and did up to Year 11 and went straight to the bank after that, along with the rest of my family. It was either the bank or Kodak. No it was just easy going like. I did banking for quite a while, then I did agency work. Which was fun. Because there was no in-house fighting.

IN: No. …

NEEN: Having the gift of the gab and being able to talk to every body helped.

IN: Yes. Yes. Excellent. And you’re married to your first boyfriend, is it? Or near enough.

NEEN: Near enough I think. Yes.
Interview with Neen  13th December 2004

IN: Near enough. When you were young?

NEEN: Yeah. I met him at seventeen. Went on a cruise, came back, met up with him again at the pub. And about two months later he asked me to marry him. I’d just turned eighteen.

IN: Yes. Excellent.

NEEN: Married at eighteen.

IN: Right. Yes. Excellent.

NEEN: Yeah. But my parents hummed and harried for a while because they thought I was too young. My sister had been divorced, brother had - his marriage was right on the rocks, off and on. So they asked me to wait two years. So we waited eighteen months and got married. Been married twenty-six years next February.

IN: Twenty-six.

NEEN: Yes.

IN: It’s getting more and more rare, you know.

NEEN: Yeah, I know. People actually congratulate you.

IN: Yeah, twenty-six years ……

NEEN: ………………. congratulations. You think. Yeah. OK. You’d think it was the norm, considering how long my parents have been married.

IN: Yeah. Yeah. Not many people are anymore. How would you describe your feelings about your schooling years? Were they positive or negative or - I assume you went to Glenroy Primary.

NEEN: Glenroy Primary. Yeah, that was fine. Got in trouble with the teachers a few times with too much talking. I always got caught. I remember one incident where the teacher left the room and, I’ll never forget this, he said ‘no one’s allowed out of your desks’. He came back and caught me and I was out of my desk. And I had to hold the back of his jacket while he walked up the passageway into another room …. classroom because it was the library. And me holding the back of his jacket. And I never got any rest after that. It was quite embarrassing.


NEEN: Yes.

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NEEN: Yeah. And would he be able to get away with it now, as a teacher? I wonder.

IN: The parents would be up the school, wouldn’t they?

NEEN: Oh, I didn’t tell my parents. I’d get in trouble at home. If it was for something talking they’d have said ‘Yeah, that would be right’.

NEEN: High school. Yeah, girls school. Try, try to work out what group you belong to. Your sort of ‘in’ crowd or the quiet ones. And I sort of wasn’t either. It wasn’t until probably Year 4 that I found one close friend. We’ve stayed friends again till I got married.

IN: Oh, OK. So you found it a bit - you were a bit isolated maybe?
NEEN: Yeah. I didn’t know where I belonged. I wasn’t big into their, all the clubs and stuff like that. And I wasn’t wild enough to join the other group. But -

IN: Do you think you would have been happier in a co-ed. school? Or not?

NEEN: No. Not from both the ones around. There wasn’t much to choose from.

IN: Pretty similar?

NEEN: Yes.

IN: Where and how did you find out about ACE? Now you know when I say ACE I mean Adult Community Education. Other organisations like this one that are specific to your community. Not just, you know -

NEEN: When I started to work here. I’d never heard of it.

IN: So what brought you here?

NEEN: A friend was doing a computer course in Excel and I didn’t know. So I thought I’ll come and have a look at it. I’d been a teacher aide for six years and knew Microsoft Word and everything fine, but not Excel. So I came here and started that.

IN: So you came for a computer course originally and stayed. You’ve never left me.

NEEN: I’ve never left you.

IN: OK. Why did you get involved? Well I’ve sort of covered that. You came as a student and then you’ve stayed and done some teaching here. I’ll ask you some questions about that in a minute. And also on the committee. Is that correct?

NEEN: That’s right.

IN: OK. How would you describe ACE when you first became involved? Would you say it was the same or different to other types of schools - schooling?

NEEN: I think - it’s definitely more for adults. I find a lot of the older age group, the retirees, come here. You don’t see the young ones. I think the average age of between forty plus.

IN: And that’s the main difference you see?

NEEN: Yeah. It’s mainly for - concerning adults. But I find it’s not advertised enough. A lot of people have never heard of it. Me included. I think they’re more - they more know CAE.

IN: Yes.

NEEN: Than anything else. I think if I said ACE they’d think ‘who are they’? I still don’t know a real lot about them. Even after working here.

IN: So do you see any differences between ACE now and when you first got involved?

NEEN: No.

IN: The same?

NEEN: The same.

IN: OK. Do you think it’s - Oh well, if you think it’s the same, then it’s not very obvious is it?
Interview with Neen  13th December 2004

NEEN: Oh well, being the same they just - no-one knows who they are.
IN: OK.  So you mean on-one knew then, and no-one knows now?
NEEN: No.  That’s right.
IN: Yeah.  Feel ACE is dead in the water.
NEEN: Unless you’re sort of in with adult education and things like that.  The normal public
don’t know who you are, who they are.
IN: Yes.  How would you describe a TAFE to someone who wanted to know about adult
education?
NEEN: The cheaper version of a university.
IN: That’s very succinct.
NEEN: Easy to get into, more access for anybody.  You’ve got more chance of getting into a
TAFE course than you would have a university course.
IN: Yes. OK.  And how would you describe ACE?  If someone said to you ‘what is ACE’?
What would you say?
NEEN: Adult education.
IN: Just adult education?  OK.
What do you think makes them similar or different to a TAFE?
NEEN: TAFE advertise a lot more.  You know what’s available.  Because of the advertising and
by mouth, people know what and who TAFE are.  The government seem to back them a lot more.  And with the university getting so hard to get into, they tend to go there.
IN: So what do you like about ACE?  Assuming there’s something.
NEEN: Probably that they’re actually for adults.  No matter what age they are.  TAFE I think
would be more for the younger ones coming from school who can’t get into university.
Or they’re people going back after starting a family or something, so they’re still young.  ACE to me is more of the retirees and people who just want to learn the new things that’s going on.  Keep up with stuff.
IN: What don’t you like?
NEEN: I can’t say I don’t like anything because - because there’s not a real lot that I know
about them.
IN: Well, specifically about here.
NEEN: Here?
IN: Just - just see it in terms of Moreland then, and say, you know, like what would you
improve if you could.
NEEN: Advertising.  It comes down to everything.  Not just for ACE but also for Moreland
Adult Education.  People just don’t know.  You mention MAE and they go ‘who’ or ‘where’?
IN: Can you see a need for ACE in the future?
Interview with Neen  13th December 2004

NEEN: There’s got to be somebody. But apart from moneywise - I don’t know what else they offer.

IN: OK. Thank you. And you’ve been a student haven’t you, of ACE?

NEEN: Yes.

IN: OK. What have you studied?

NEEN: First course I did here was Excel. Then I was a guinea pig for the on-line with RMIT to do Cert. II in IT. What else have I done? A couple of multimedia courses, business course.

IN: And if I remember rightly you did Workplace.

NEEN: Oh, yeah. Who could forget that?

IN: Who could forget.

Why did you choose ACE and not TAFE?

NEEN: Because I worked here. It was more convenient.

IN: OK. Do you think the courses are different or the same as when you first started in ACE as a student? Do you think what we offer has changed? Or what MAE is?

NEEN: It’s different.

IN: It’s different. OK.

NEEN: They’re not a lot of little short things, they’re more involved, they have it on-line. A lot more paperwork. There’s still the odd course that people can do if they’re - it’s more detailed stuff that they’re doing now.

IN: OK. Can you see other changes that are happening in ACE?

NEEN: No.

IN: No. OK. Have you gone to a TAFE or university as well as ACE?

NEEN: No.

IN: Why do you think people go to ACE centres? What gets them in, when they do find it?

NEEN: When they do find it, when it’s actually advertised. Well, for the students that I have in my classes, they feel more comfortable because of the age group.

IN: OK.

NEEN: They aren’t sort of left behind if you’re in with a class full of kids and things like that.

IN: Good. So they - they’re actually comfortable - what, with their learning or just the facilities? Or how do you mean?

NEEN: What they’re learning.

IN: Not just the people in the class?

NEEN: Who’s in the class, the ages of the other students. They feel a lot more comfortable with them if they’re their own age.

MJC
Interview with Neen  13th December 2004

IN: OK. And you’re on the committee, and I know you do bits of volunteer work here because of that. So how long have you been doing volunteer or committee work? You know, I mean, I think in terms of volunteer, look back and think how long you’ve really done volunteer work. Because a lot of people get engaged helping out. Think of the many ways you’ve helped out. So it would be how many years approximately do you think?

NEEN: Well just from when I did the first course.

IN: So that would have been how many years, you reckon?

NEEN: Five years, five and a half years at least. Yeah.

IN: OK.

NEEN: Just helping in classes and -

IN: And why did you get involved doing committee volunteer work. Because you’ve been on the committee for about four or five years. Haven’t you?

NEEN: I can’t say no.

IN: Soft touch. Oh no, I like helping people if I’ve got the skills to show them.

NEEN: Yeah. Like helping people, yeah. That’s fine. And what kind of activities have you done as a committee member or volunteer?

IN: With ACE?

NEEN: Computers, flyers, organising classes, contacting students, office work. Whatever has to be done and I can do it and help out.

IN: Yes. Or Christmas party functions. I seem to remember you many a time with your apron on.

NEEN: Out in the kitchen chopping up things. Yeah. Things that have to be organised.

IN: Yeah. And the meetings. Because you’re our Secretary, which we didn’t mention.

NEEN: Yes. I have to type minutes up. Write minutes, make sure that everyone gets a copy of it. Chase up things that have happened in the meetings.

IN: Do you think it’s changed, the volunteers, since you started?

NEEN: Not so much changed. I think less people volunteer.

IN: And do you reckon there is a reason for that?

NEEN: Less people are coming here. There’s too many similar places around the area.

IN: Too many ACE?

NEEN: Yes. So everyone’s sort of competing against each other for numbers, for the volunteers, for everything.
INTERVIEW WITH NEEN 13TH DECEMBER 2004

IN: Oh, yeah. And why do you think other people, apart from yourself, come as volunteers. Think about committee and volunteers. Do you think they all just come, you know, their reasons?

NEEN: They couldn’t say no to you when you asked them.

IN: Couldn’t say no. OK. So if you think about a few specifics, what about people like, say, K?

NEEN: Well, they were students, well, they are students actually. We need some - I felt we needed someone else who didn’t understand a lot of things as well. So they could ask questions like I do, and not feel stupid. Just new blood. We just - everyone was sort of getting tired so we just needed new people. So I asked them if they’d join.

IN: Excellent. And think about your working in ACE. Now why do you, or did you, work in ACE? Specifically.

NEEN: Management. Easy to communicate with. The job’s not very hard once everything is sorted out. Just lots of little things that you tend to run out of time doing.

IN: Yes.

NEEN: The staff are easy to get on with. The facilities are fine. The pay’s fine.

IN: Well a few people do complain about the pay. But you find it OK?

NEEN: Well what other jobs do you …………..

IN: Yes. Because you’ve worked as other - in other jobs. Yes. That’s the difference isn’t it?

NEEN: Oh, yeah. My husband is always telling me he’ll retire and I can work full time. Because here you earn more in half a week.

IN: Yes. And yet other people complain because ACE pays thirty-two dollars an hour, compared with forty-five in the TAFE.

NEEN: Well, they do the same work.

IN: Doing exactly the same work. Yes.

NEEN: That’s fine. Do you think ACE is under pressure to change? And if so from where?

IN: Yes or no?

NEEN: They have to - everyone has to change with the times. So they’ll either work out to advertise more to let more people know about them. Otherwise they’ll lose their government backing. They could. But they also need to look into the areas that they are situated.

IN: So you mean like locations?

NEEN: Location-wise. Yeah. There’s just too many, everyone’s suffering.

IN: OK. Can you describe what IT was available when you started in ACE? Was it the same as now or different?
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NEEN: Well, they were individual classes that you learnt Excel or you learnt Microsoft Word. Then now it’s sort of a bit of everything. A lot more involved. A lot of it is - it’s more detailed. A lot of the students, especially some of the adults, because they haven’t grown up with the computers and stuff are lost in the language.

IN: OK. OK. And do you think there’s a big difference between the IT available in mainstream education and ACE? If you picture schools, universities, TAFEs and what happens in ACE.

NEEN: I think there’s less offered at ACE. And they don’t have the teachers to show them, to take the classes and things like that. You just learn more in TAFE.

IN: About it?

NEEN: Yes. You’ve got to keep up-to-date, especially the programs and things. The universities tend to have more money to keep things up-graded. And ACE classes like ours, I think you’ve got to push or lower the standards and hope it will fit the programs you have here available.

IN: Yeah. OK. ………..furthered………… You were one of the first students to be enrolled in Learn Links as the RMIT course is known. And your position in that was you were an on-line student, you said didn’t you?

NEEN: Yes.

IN: And what did you say you did? The -

NEEN: The Cert. II in IT.

IN: And you got involved with that because you were an existing student?

NEEN: Yes.

IN: OK. Did you find it a positive or a negative experience? Can I ask you?

NEEN: It was amusing actually because it was the first time we’d done it. Some of the questions you couldn’t answer. They didn’t, they didn’t have someone who had never done it before, to go through it.

IN: So no-one had checked.

NEEN: So no-one had really checked. So you were sort of left in the air with some of it thinking ‘what are they asking here’? But they’ve improved a little bit more since then.

IN: Do you think it had any impact on ACE, the place that ran it. Do you think it was positive or negative.

NEEN: Positive. Because it allowed people to do it in their own time. So if they couldn’t make it to class, they could at least do the work at home and then sort of -

IN: So that was the flexibility of on-line?

NEEN: Yes.

IN: OK. And do you think doing it has made ACE more or less like say RMIT/TAFE? Having it available that way. Would you see an impact in that way on ACE or not?

NEEN: Yes. It’s opened doors up for a lot more people.
IN: OK. And do you think Learn Links itself has or hasn’t got a future?

NEEN: It would have to have a future. Computers are going to be here all the time - so.

IN: OK. OK. Is there anything else you’d like to add? Any comments about ACE or anything or -

NEEN: Just advertise a bit more so people know who you are.

IN: OK. Thank you for that. Now would you mind if I think of anything else to ask you about at another time?

NEEN: No. That will be fine.

IN: Well, thank you for participating. I’ll be getting this transcribed and you’ll get a copy of it. Anything you want deleted you just take out. OK?

NEEN: OK. Yes.

IN: Thank you Neen.

Finish.
IN: Interview with Rani, May 2003

Rani, you know you don’t have to go ahead with this interview, you can stop at any time. You can choose to have your comments removed. And you can just stop by pressing that button on the machine. OK?

RANI: All right.

IN: Can you tell me a bit about yourself? Like where you were born and about your family.

RANI: Right. I was born in Malaysia in 1941. To a business background. And I was the first born of a family of ten. And I was fortunate to be pampered with affluence. And therefore I had a reasonably good childhood. And had the best of everything during my time in at home during that period of time.

IN: That was lucky. Very fortunate. Good. And do you think being one of ten made a big difference in your life. You know, some people have no siblings.

RANI: Oh, I think really very interesting. Because I - I was considered the best, you know, privileged child because I came first. And there was no others that followed for a period of eight years I was the only child.

IN: Oh. Right.

RANI: So my father and mother just treated me like a princess.

IN: Oh, lovely.

RANI: And then suddenly at short intervals the other nine followed. And I didn’t know what hit me. But of course - Yes. Because I think my very stable home background helped me to be the person I am.

IN: And with your parents did you - were you close to them? I know, well you know, you were their little golden girl. But -

RANI: Yes. I was closer to my Dad than my Mum. I had some issues with her as I was growing up. And I felt a bit threatened by her because - You’ll be surprised when I tell you - She had this colour bias. My mother is part Thai and part Indian. And she was of a fair complexion and tiny, an exquisite looking woman. And she always felt I was black. And that it would be hard to get me married. So she encouraged me to study.

Addition after interview on tape finished:

My mother was pregnant at sixteen and gave birth to me at seventeen. She made me feel having me was a big mistake and she did not touch me until she was twenty-one, because I had a rash all over my body(not on the face).
My grandmother put olive oil on the rash and I was put outside then covered in plantain leaves. For five years I couldn’t speak as no-one spoke to me, so I never learned to form words. When I was five they took me to India to a “voodoo” doctor who drilled my throat (showed scars) to get me to speak. I always felt ugly about myself.

My father’s love kept me going. He gave me so much. When I was at Madras University I won the oratory competition for three years in a row. My father held me and cried like a baby for the child who was never going to speak.

It was my father’s support and encouragement that always kept me going. He educated all of his daughters.

Before she died, I spoke to my mother and forgave her as she had been so young.

IN: Right. Well, that’s empowering in a way.

RANI: Yes. She said ‘You study, education is the passport to life. I’ll have to find a big dowry to get you married’. And I - When I was very young I resented that very much. But I didn’t know she was influenced by her cultural background.

IN: Yes. You don’t realize that as a child.

RANI: And I disliked her for that. But she was a most loving woman any person could dream of having for a mother. But we had this conflict for a long time. And I didn’t resolve it as a teenager. It’s only later in my life I realized she was sincerely concerned about my complexion.

IN: Yes. It sounds funny doesn’t it? To us now.

RANI: So I just came - And I was a stranger to my brothers and sisters. Because of the huge age difference. So I would only come during the school holidays. And my father would tell me ‘Come home’ every school holiday. So that I would be with them.

IN: So you’re, in a way, like another mother. Almost.

MJC
Interview with Steve 12th January, 2003

RANI: I think, yes. Especially now that we have no parents left.

IN: And so you travelled a lot?

RANI: I travelled a lot.

IN: Oh. That’s interesting. Back and forth from Malaysia to India.

RANI: From Malaysia to India.

IN: And how many times? About what, about four times a year or something.

RANI: Four times - Three times a year.

IN: Back and forth.

RANI: Back and forth.

IN: And were you brought up by, you know, really traditional school once you went there?

RANI: Yes. That I was really. Because what happened is my father is from a background where he wanted his children - He was from India. He came to Malaysia, met my Mum, fell in love with her. And there was this huge age difference of twenty-two years between them. He fell in love with his bosses’ daughter. You know, was educated, a good thing. He was just a stowaway on a spice ship ……

And so he wanted his children to follow his path. And so he sent me to a school for six years. Where I would learn my script and things. So when I came to secondary school I was, you know, coming into a background where a lot of English, mainstream English was taking place. And I just learned English as a second language when I was in primary school.

IN: Right.

RANI: First was Tamil.

IN: Tamil. Ah. Good. And what was your first language then? Till you went to school.

RANI: Telugu and Tamil.

IN: Oh. That’s interesting.

RANI: And so I learned Tamil before I learned English.

IN: Oh. Yeah. And then English. OK.
And what would you call your first language?

RANI: Telugu.

IN: I'll check the spelling later.

RANI: Yes.

IN: Is that a guess?

RANI: No.

IN: That's really interesting. You know that thing of having another language. And then you went to school.

RANI: And learned another script altogether. Tamil.

IN: Yes. ……..

RANI: There were no Telugu schools. My father just wanted me to learn a southern Indian language.

IN: Oh. Right.

RANI: Yes. So I went to Tamil school for six years.

IN: And when you went to India itself. What was the language they were educated in?

RANI: English.

IN: English. So did you know English then? Or did you have to learn it?

RANI: I finished high school in English. And then went to university.

IN: Yes. That's interesting. So in a way you swapped between three languages before your university years.

RANI: Yes.

IN: Very interesting.

And when you went to university, which university did you go to?

RANI: I went to Madras University.

IN: Madras. OK. And you did?

RANI: My Bachelor.

IN: In Arts?
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RANI: In Literature.

IN: In Literature. In Madras. OK.

RANI: In Madras.

IN: What did you do after that?

RANI: After that I got a scholarship to go to New Zealand. I got my Masters. I had a Commonwealth scholarship to do my Masters in New Zealand.

IN: Good. And when you finished your Masters then you went back to -

RANI: I went back to Malaysia.

IN: OK.

RANI: I taught at the university in - First in Humanities in Penang. And then I came - I went back to secondary school teaching.

IN: Yes.

RANI: Because I preferred to be with the school kids then. So that was - I taught there for a few years before they said ‘You didn’t have teacher training’.

IN: Oh. Right.

RANI: In Malaysia. They brought that in. People before, in Malaysia people could teach after their degree. Teacher training wasn’t necessary there. So when they said ‘You need teacher training’, I applied to New Zealand back again, after my Masters. I went twice to New Zealand.

IN: Oh. Right.

RANI: After my Masters I went home. And then I came back. Went back to finish my Masters and my Bachelor of Teaching.

IN: Right.

RANI: So I went to Wellington College for that.

IN: Gee. You got around didn’t you?

RANI: Yes. Then I stayed on for a few years. I did my Post Graduate Diploma and my Diploma in Education.

IN: So that was in ……

RANI: In New Zealand. I loved New Zealand. And so until Muldoon said foreigners who have been using student visas, you know, should leave.
IN: Go. Yes.
RANI: So because I overstayed in the sense I kept doing courses.
IN: Yes. Yes.
RANI: So I applied into Australia and I applied into Fiji. So I went to Northern Territory and I went for the interview and everything. And I took off from there because I couldn’t stand the environment.
IN: Yes.
RANI: So I went to the interview in Fiji and it was heaven.
IN: Yes.
RANI: So I chose to - Fiji.
IN: Go to Fiji. Oh. Right. It’s amazing the things you don’t know about somebody, you know. I don’t know these things about you.
RANI: Yes. Yes. Well, I was in New Zealand when I met my husband. It wasn’t anything. We were just, you know, good mates at university. And then when I went to Fiji they sent me to the first capital of Fiji which …… Island. And when the Principal took me to the staff room, I nearly fell off the chair when I met Jagdish there.
IN: And he was working there as well?
RANI: He was working. He graduated and he went back and taught there.
IN: Oh. Right.
RANI: And so destiny, I suppose, brought us together again.
IN: So you met in New Zealand, then you went back and both ended up in Fiji. By mistake you sort of ended up together there.
RANI: Yes. In that particular school. So we got married.
IN: Oh. Good. And then when did you decide to come out here?
RANI: I came when the coup took place.
IN: Oh. Yes.
RANI: When the coup took place. Because I had my sisters here and we felt - Because I had a daughter who was really very bright and very, very motivated to do more. And Fiji was bringing in this thing, you know, to have certain marks to get in and certain amount of money and all those
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RANI: Yes. And come to Australia. We both sacrificed a good professional career to come here. I was high school principal of a very renowned school. And so was Jagdish. We sacrificed that and came here.

RANI: I had the status. I was recognized. I was in the Examination Board. I was, you know, I did a lot of significant things. I was a very well known unionist in the Teacher’s Union. And I lost everything, I was just nobody here. That hit me. I think it’s the way you’re brought up.

IN: And it’s taken a while to get back to having a reputation. Where people go ‘Oh. Padma’.


IN: Oh. No. Here you’d be Padma. But Mrs Singh there.

RANI: Yes. It was interesting because it taught me humility, I think, coming here. You know, like you take it for granted you’re known. And, you know, the business that goes with it. And then I came here - I realized, you know, ‘God, what is this’, you know.

IN: Yes.

RANI: And it sort of depressed me for a few years actually. Having - But Australia has taught me humility. A sense of spiritualism. It must be funny to hear this even though I taught it at Hindu school and all that. It made me look into within me. And find a resource that I thought I never had. That calm and serenity that came from within. And I began to use my religious principles to understand maybe this is the path God wanted me to take. To come down to earth and to view and take stock of what’s happening. And now I am just - I think I’m a person of very calm disposition. I don’t let things really-

IN: So it’s a learning experience?

RANI: Oh. Yes.
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IN: So perhaps removing all that external stuff, made you internalize.

RANI: After all these years to discover what it is that’s happening to me. What kind of person I am. And I think Australia taught me that.

IN: Yes. And that’s strange in a way, isn’t it? Because it sounds like a loss of status. Which it was physically, you know, in terms of all your -

RANI: Yes. And you see, you know, your photograph plastered in local newspapers with big headlines and all that. And here, you know, it was a humbling experience, I reckon.

IN: Yes. But must make for a good relationship with your students. Because you can see that, you know, even though a lot of them aren’t like you in that not literate or whatever. But they’ve certainly become displaced and alienated. Haven’t they?

RANI: Yes. Yes. And having done that is why I know even from my early experience in Tamil for six years and then coming in. And I just struggled to express myself, because I didn’t know enough English. And my father insisted we should speak in our languages all the time. Because he was threatened by English. He didn’t speak a word.

IN: Right. Yes.

RANI: You know?

IN: Yet a lot of people do, don’t they? Of his background.

RANI: It was good. But then as the others were growing, a lot more English was spoken. And the kids do that. But I wasn’t able to do that because I was first born. And I had to follow.

IN: Yes. So it’s an amazing jump if you think about it. From first language to second language to third language. And you teach the third language.

RANI: That’s right.

IN: If you think about that, a lot of people can’t make it to the second. People like me only had one language quite often. And yet you’ve made those jumps in what you’re teaching.

RANI: Yes.

IN: And your grammar is obviously better than the rest of us.

RANI: Oh. No.

IN: OK. So they’re the factors you think made you the person you are now?
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RANI: Yes.

IN: This strong family and cultural...

RANI: Yes.

IN: And all those things. And being a mother?

RANI: And being a mother. Oh, my God. I was a late Mum. Believe me, I still struggle to be a good Mum.

IN: I don’t think that ever changes. OK. I’ve asked you those. We sort of moved around a bit with our questions. But that’s fine.

How did you find out about ACE? The first time, you know.

RANI: OK. As you know I was Principal for several years of a very large secondary school. And when I came here I saw what was happening in the classrooms, from my children’s experience.

IN: Yes.

RANI: Everything. And I being - I was very well known for the school I ran, for it’s discipline. I was a disciplinarian. And I was not willing to get into a secondary school system that I am going to go in as an assistant teacher. And be harassed with the new cultural scene, scenery. I wasn’t ready. So I didn’t know what to do. But I knew that I wanted to teach. So I met - I went to - you know, how you say before - They’ve removed them now. There used to be a P - What’s his name? I’s second husband. P?

IN: Oh. I know the man you mean. You mean (name).

RANI: No not H.

IN: Not H. That was the …...

RANI: It’s a place where people can go and have a chat, community sort of thing. And then he said ‘My wife is in the ACE sector’ Then he explained what ACE was. I C And he said in ….. ‘Why don’t you take all your qualifications and go there to see what she can do for you’? See when I did that I immediately employed me to teach English as a Second Language. More of my background and that she felt would be able to teach them. So while I was there she could only give me about four hours a week and that wasn’t enough. So her good friend was a Neighbourhood House. And so when I went to the Neighbourhood House, S looked at all my qualifications and she said ‘Look. This is fantastic. But’. And I said ‘What is the but about’? She said ‘I’m a stickler for having the record right. Unless you do a Post-graduate Diploma or at that time, General Certificate of teaching English as a Second Language. You cannot step into my classroom’. So then she said ‘But there is one other thing you can do. You can teach cooking’. 

Comment [IN2526]: Family-strong
Comment [m2527]: Family-being a mother
Comment [m2528]: Family-struggle to be a mum
Comment [IN2529]: Secondary--principal
Comment [IN2530]: Discipline x2
Comment [m2531]: Community
Comment [m2532]: Family connection ACE
Comment [IN2533]: ESL
Comment [IN2534]: Neighbourhood House x2
Comment [m2535]: ESL
Comment [IN2536]: STORY
IN: Oh.

RANI: And use ESL as base. And so they wanted to run a cooking class. So I said ‘I can teach Asian cooking’. You know, Malaysian Indian, Thai, whatever. So I - she offered me a job right on the spot, if I could prepare and show her the curriculum that I could use language to teach cookery to these ESL students.

IN: OK.

RANI: And so she employed me. I had three. While I was doing my course at Melbourne University course. She gave me three sessions of cookery classes. And that was humbling enough for me. Oh, it was an interesting experience. But - And she kept telling me, you know, you’re networking. You’re making yourself known and all that.

I’ll always hold her with the highest regard for her practical wisdom. And I think I am here with you today because of what - the door that S opened. How I came in contact.

IN: That took you in …… I just thought it was funny when you think of all your expertise, and you had to teach cookery.

RANI: Cookery.

IN: Cookery. As though you were unable to cook. Did you find that you could actually do that thing of helping people. Because of your expertise, it was really underneath.

RANI: See that is when I began to realize how ACE is a wonderful, you know, sort of forum or a platform for a lot of women who are looking for that special connection. And even when I was teaching this cookery class, woman would talk to me about their predicaments. It would be children or their husband. I know a couple of them who were on trial separation and all that. And then I thought ‘Oh my God’, you know, they’re dipping into something that I used to do with my staff. You know, and that I was capable of lending them that extension of myself. And it came so naturally to me.

IN: So they weren’t just coming for cooking?

RANI: No. They were -

IN: They were there for other things.

RANI: Interaction. That is to get away from the house and come to a place where they’d meet other people. And other doors opened to them. And I thought ‘This is such a fabulous environment to work in’. And particularly at the age that I was in.
IN: Yes.

RANI: My mid fifties.

IN: Yes.

RANI: You know. And so I think I’ve never looked back. Because I think this is where I want to be.

IN: It doesn’t pay as well as other places. We all admit that. But there are other compensations sometimes.

RANI: Yes. That’s right. I never think of that, you know, about the money aspect of it. I mean, I think I’m paid all right. And what I get out of the classroom is something so priceless.

IN: Yes. So to speak. And that’s why I’ve been here. I was offered a job at TAFE and AMES, but I chose to stay with ACE because of - I believe this is what a lot of people, you know, from bilingual backgrounds. And women who’ve lived for a long time and the opportunities were taken away because of their bodies and concern for the well-being of the family. They come here, they really want to learn. At the same time they interact with others. I don’t think you’ll get it anywhere else.

IN: No. No. That’s interesting.

RANI: OK. I can tell you from my personal experience with students who have tried TAFE and gave it up. Right now I’ve got two students in N…

Community House. They were with me, they did well. They completed their Certificate I. They marched off to TAFE thinking “Oh, I want to learn this intense program, fifteen weeks, I need to go” When they went there they felt a sense of loss.

IN: Oh. Yes.

RANI: For three reasons. (names) and have come back to me. And she, and these are the three reasons. And she said ‘It was impersonal’.

IN: Right.

RANI: Nobody noticed the individual who needed that extra coaching or anything. In the class there were twenty-five of them, in some contexts thirty in a class.

IN: Oh. Yeah.
RANI: And then she felt, here she could just go on, you know, like right in the middle of the class, she would say ‘Oh. My son had this problem’. And you can take a breather and then say ‘OK. Maybe we’ll talk about it during coffee’ and come back. She was completely ignored.

IN: Yes. Oh, right. So she wasn’t getting the support.

RANI: That is the second reason. And the third reason she said, is the embarrassment element of it. Like in a small group in a Community House, they could put up their hand and talk about things. And not feel so self-conscious. But here she said ‘I became very self-conscious to say. Because I felt if I said the wrong thing people would laugh at me. And I felt I wasn’t good enough. Whereas here I feel comfortable, I feel at ease’. And at all these places nobody is going to say ‘That stupid woman is talking again’.

I thought that was a very interesting point she talked about. And L was another one. Went off and they came back and they made one comment.

And they said ‘We know you love us’. You know, that the tutor, it’s not just Rani, the tutor I’m talking about, you know. When you come here, JG would give you extension or J would give you that. And they feel good about themselves, knowing there’s a teacher who, who takes her back and says ‘Well done. That’s excellent’. You know we’ve done that. And they didn’t understand that. And sometimes I want to - They say ‘I can’t do it today’. And I’ll say, you know, ‘Try’. If not I’ll take her aside, put her in the kitchen, I will still give her the assessment at a different date and note in the roll, this was done because she didn’t feel comfortable.

IN: Yes. So that’s that flexible thing we always talk about.

RANI: Yes. And I think the flexible delivery aspect is a good thing. Because they’re drawn to it. They, you know, they - some of the students I’ve had say ‘I’m not doing that today. I can’t do it. I’m scared’. Or something like that. But in the TAFE they can’t do that. It’s all so, you know, like a robot.

IN: Yes.

RANI: I don’t know how ... do .... Because it is what my students who have given up TAFE, have come back and said.

IN: Have said. Yes. That’s really good. You get that feedback.

RANI: Yes. And I ask them.

IN: It’s really good because it shows that you haven’t just kept them. You’ve pathwayed them in the first place. But they’ve chosen to come back.
RANI: Yes. I did. In fact, I’ve spoken to them because they wanted more hours. And I said they can enter the TAFE. I said ‘Go to the TAFE and you’ll get twenty hours or fifteen hours or whatever it is. And that’s what you need, you go there’. But they have come back for just a limited number of hours. Because they think that is better for them.

IN: Yes. So they’re still learning, but they’re getting something else. Whatever that something else is that they need - support.

RANI: They feel welcome. That’s it.

IN: Yes. Did you - would you call that being part of the community?

RANI: Yes.

IN: Do you think community is the word that you’d use to describe it?

RANI: Yes. And also I think there’s some - the multicultural aspect of it in TAFE is also threatening for them. Because they found clustering. This is what they said. They -the Iraqi students will stay together, the Chinese students. There were not -

IN: Oh, right. Integrated. Right.

RANI: Integrating. But then here they’re in a classroom and be Arabic speaking in that context. In Nicholson Street.

IN: Right.

RANI: But there too there is a difference. The Iranians and the Iraqis - and they don’t speak. They all are Arabic, but they don’t speak that language. They use the script, but it is entirely different.

IN: Yes.

RANI: But I always try to cement the group because of group dynamics. I want them - a sense of belonging, a sense of direction. And so I get that response to what I’m trying to do, because they connect with me.

IN: Yes. Yes.

RANI: Of course. Yes. That is very important, I think, if you are a tutor in ACE. To sort out the - iron out the differences that is. Another good example is my Thursday class. That particular student who came to my class, and the whole class reacted to her.

IN: Yes.
RANI: And they showed that sort of sense of animosity and, you know, dislike for her and everything. But I didn’t let them get away with it. We spoke about it. I said ‘She has every right to be here. As you have the right to be. Accept it. Use your Christian love or whatever your religion is. Don’t reject people, don’t hurt people’. I have no problem now.

IN: And yet others have had problems with that woman. Every other teacher.

RANI: Yes. Every other teacher. I have no problem. She knows if she gets out of hand, I just tell her ‘Here we go again’, you know. And then she said ‘Sorry. Sorry’. And the class in itself had a learning curve there. But they realize - because once, I was almost in tears. Well I couldn’t take -I don’t like injustice of any kind, you know. She came and sat somewhere and they said to her ‘That’s my place’. I said ‘Nobody has got a freehold property, you know, here. If you come late you take the chair that is available’. ‘But we - our other teachers have’. I said ‘No, not in my class. First come, first serve. If you come you take the best seat that is available. I’m not reserving chairs for any person’.

IN: Yes.

RANI: And that has helped them, because they’ve learned to accept her. Now I see, because she is brighter than most. And then they ask her - they go up to her and say ‘How did you do this’. And I say ‘Good’. And she did one thing she’s never done. Because I taught her for three years. She brought up, at Greek Easter, cakes for the class. For the first time - That was my reaction. That was the reaction of K and Ch and people. But she knew that she has to change to fit in. And that change has been noted. And appreciated.

IN: Yes.

RANI: She’s one of them now.

IN: That is excellent. Because, you know, she’s been coming here on and off for quite a long time. And had two other teachers that I can think of before. And she’s always been extremely disruptive in the class. And one of them refused to have her any longer. And when she applied to come back, you know, she wanted to come to your class specifically. I thought ‘Oh dear. Should I, you know, ask you to do it’ You know?

RANI: I knew I could handle her. Even when - Like she tried it with me a couple of times. You know, like she would say ‘Oh. I have to have a cup of tea’. I said ‘Look. We will have a cup of tea in the middle of the lesson to give you a break from the monotony of the lesson. If I let you have a cup of tea, others will too. It’s going to take time from my lesson’.

IN: Yes.

RANI: ‘So please be seated. You have it at a quarter to eleven’.
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IN: Like everyone.

RANI: Everyone else. And I keep to it. Because I think - I don’t believe in one thing. That, you know, like in one centre, my manager said ‘Oh. You’re being a bit tough to the students’. I said ‘They have to learn. This is how it is expected. They can’t go and say I want. They have to adjust and amalgamate their behavior, what’s non-behavior, standard acceptance. I can’t give preferential treatment, you know, this is how it’s going to be’.

IN: And they love it. Because they never leave. Let’s face it, they never leave.

RANI: They know - they know that they can’t push me around.

IN: Yes. Yes. No. That’s excellent.

RANI: So that is the -

IN: OK. What would you say you think are the main differences between the ACE when you started and now? Just the main, you know.

RANI: I can - I’ve been thinking a lot about this. I can tell you one thing that I’m annoyed about is, it’s becoming less concerned with the individual, and more concerned with administration. That’s one point I observe. And the load of strict guidelines that has come out, you know. The paper shuffling aspect of it.

IN: Yes.

RANI: That puts the teacher off from really allowing her class to enjoy what they like. For example, having an accredited course puts this additional pressure of having to make them do something that they really - Even though you say, you know, you say ‘Yes I want to be assessed’. ‘No I don’t want to be assessed’. But if I had a whole class saying ‘No’, your funding will go down the drain. Unless - we are here to serve the community, but we need the funding to serve them.

IN: Yes.

RANI: And so by putting this National Framework, I mean, I think, it should be given to people who are capable of accepting and they have a challenge. To most of them, the piece of document means nothing. They say ‘We don’t want to go to university’. They want to come in. That’s how it was in the beginning, when I started teaching. They want to come in - (End side one)

And, you know, it might be public debate or self expression or whatever it was. You know, what they would do, talk about it, bring in their homework. Now it’s more regimented.
Like if I’m doing CSWE and then, you know, sometimes - Well they don’t have to teach all that grammar. But we have to, because one of the performance criteria is ‘Has the student used past tense in three different forms of past tense’. Like past perfect, present continuous or something like that.

IN: And I don’t even know what they are. Why should they learn it all?

RANI: That’s it. We are told to, they are used. And then part of ………………They have to write four hundred words in Level 2 and two hundred to four hundred words in Level 3. End of Level 3. And two hundred words in Level 1. None of my students would be able to. I mean, why are we so pedantic?

IN: Yes. No. I agree. I think it’s very inflexible and all that stuff.

RANI: Yes. So where is the flexible delivery since now. You tell me.

IN: Yes. No. I can see that.

RANI: The other thing I find about ACE is, you know, there was a time when the ACE head office was more connected with what was happening in the, you know, in the mainstream. That offering of services and so on. Now it looks like ACE head office is only, you know, responsible to see that work is carried out and papers are returned to them. They should come out and see what’s happening. And you don’t get that connectedness again, you know -

IN: No.

RANI: In speaking with that. They should know what kind of clients come in. You know, make a visit.

IN: Yes.

RANI: Sit one session to see. Now most of our students, you know, like the ones I’m teaching, they always say ‘Why should I do this assessment? We don’t want to do it. We want to come. We want to learn in a relaxed environment’.

The teacher, at the back of her mind, every time she does a unit of work, she says ‘At the end of this, I have to do this, you know. So, you know, the teacher is pressured.'

IN: Yes.

RANI: And while ACE claims to teach what the students want to learn - subject area. But if I follow the National Framework, I have to follow the modules as prescribed.

IN: Yes.
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1302 RANI: So where do I have the opportunity to get that **flexible** environment.
1303 Where I can talk about, ‘See what’s happening now?’ You know, I can do a unit, I’m tied down to that. I want to go back when they could enjoy a classroom. Where everybody had a sense of enjoyment. They were learning **without** pressure.
1304 IN: Yes.
1305 RANI: Now they are always under pressure. The tutors are under pressure and the teachers are, you know, the students are under pressure.
1306 IN: Yes.
1307 RANI: So where is that **flexible** environment?
1308 IN: Yes.
1309 RANI: Talk about. It is too **difficult**. It’s the money.
1310 IN: Yes. I agree. And that would be the main difference you’d see?
1311 RANI: That’s all I see as the difference. That irks me. I feel terribly **frustrated** by that.
1312 IN: Yes.
1313 RANI: Because - And they're beginning to react today, because they say - Like especially the Wednesday class I’m holding ........, you know, the other day.
1314 IN: Right.
1315 RANI: And they will protest and say ‘That is sophisticated’. And yet in my mind I have to say ‘This service is for them’. If I could get that into an accredited class, there’d be many more who’d be sent to us. Where they come where they want to. Where they feel they’re familiar with the people and the environment. For their sake, we have to push this.
1316 IN: So in a way the lower levels, it’s more inflexible for them than it is at the upper levels.
1317 RANI: Yes.
1318 IN: Because in Adult Further Ed., we can choose what we run.
1319 RANI: Yes. I’m questioning ACE. Where is, I want them to spell out, where the flexible **element** is coming through. If there is something like flexible
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IN: Delivery, if they have to be honestly do soul searching. We are becoming a mini-tech.

IN: That’s right. Yeah. And they talk about flexible delivery as though that’s only on-line now.

RANI: Yes. And that is again, you know, I have my reservation about it. Isn’t it a corporate business now?

IN: Mm.

RANI: Like where you say on-line, we are all getting connected. So the giants up there, they’re getting the cheesecake.

IN: Yes.

RANI: Where here, they’re struggling. We don’t even get the little crumbs from them.

IN: No.

RANI: What we get is not even enough to pay our tutors. You know, why ACE is losing tutors?

IN: And you need to be as qualified. In fact more.

RANI: More. Yes. And why does …… for ACE sector.

RANI: This is the reason why. I’ve spoken with so many and they say ‘They get forty something in TAFE’.

IN: Forty-nine now.

RANI: Forty-nine now. And why should the ACFE, you know, providers tutors be paid so little?

IN: Yes.

RANI: We deliver the same thing.

IN: And you need to be as qualified. In fact more.

RANI: More. Yes. And why does …… for ACE sector.

IN: No. I think they relate it to the big buildings. ‘Oh well, you don’t have the infrastructure’. They forget we have to pay commercial rent.

RANI: Exactly. And I think, ‘Who’s going to look into all of this’? Is it, you know, ACE is now beginning to say ‘It’s so hard to get the tutor and hold onto the tutor’. Because they’re tempted. They’ve got the same qualifications. They get $19 more than what we get. And why would they stay?
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IN: Exactly.

RANI: So that’s another thing. Where ACE I think it’s going wrong. In ACE we are in the bargaining capacity at …….. They have to bring these issues up.

IN: Yes. I agree. OK.

And how would you describe ACE to someone who was new to it? Now.

RANI: OK. I do it all the time. I get phone calls. I tell them, I tell them it’s for those who come for the first time. And they can’t afford the time, but they want to do preliminary sort of things. I recommend ACE is the best thing, any Neighbourhood House or learning centre. Because that way it gives them a peek, a window to the cultural framework of the country as well. They meet people, they learn basic skills and courtesy and, and politeness. And learning to adjust to a new environment. I feel what better place than to come here and get a slice of Australian life. And then when they are more communicative and learnt the basic courtesies and, you know, the do’s and the don’ts. Then when they go into TAFE, they’re better adjusted. And that will be in a better position to give them that little hug or, you know, a welcoming atmosphere. But if they put them straight into - of course most foreigners who come into here, we are conditioned by the concrete buildings and , you know. And then they feel secure when they say ‘I’m going to a real school’, they say. But once they get accommodated to our kind of environment. They are enriched by it.

IN: Mm.

RANI: Then they - As I say, they will still move on but this like the ……. sort of thing.

IN: Yes.

RANI: And I think ACE has a permanent place in our community. …….. Because the purpose for which ACE is placed, served well.

IN: Yes. I know. Thank you for that. Can you think of any ideas to make ACE better? In some way. Obviously there’s the teachers’ pay. So that relates to funding. Doesn’t it?

RANI: That does. And why, why can’t they look at us as being equal?

IN: Yes.

RANI: Our qualification, our expertise. In fact we give greater spiritual, I think spirituality.

MJC
I give more than what the money pays me. And I make them feel secure in the love I have for them. For their well being, for their learning ability, I think. There were people who couldn’t write in my class, you know.

IN: Yes.

RANI: They’re writing now. They are expressing their - Because I know and make them say ‘It is for your personal satisfaction’. That you are, you know, like I spoke - Like I rang G today. ‘You’ve been very silly to come down a Level, than your Level really should be. That is silly to say ‘I will come back to the Wednesday class. The Wednesday class is not at your Level’. But she feels good, she feels good about herself because she is the best among -

IN: In the class. Yes.

RANI: Whereas there her status is challenged by other people who do better than her.

IN: Who have higher skills. Yes.

RANI: Yes. That’s right.

IN: So it is better to be a big frog in a smaller puddle. As we always say.

RANI: And so - that’s what I tell them. It was my duty. It’s her choice. It was my duty as a tutor to let her know that she had to go higher with her skills. And not be complacent.

IN: Yes. Yes.

RANI: You know, come down a Level.

IN: Yes.

RANI: But she explained that she wants to be there because of her own situation.

IN: She doesn’t want the pressure, you mean?

RANI: Yes. Because now they’re moving on to Level 3, next semester.

IN: Oh.

RANI: Because I finished. Some of them got through Certificate level. But about three of them who need to do something, base units. And others in ......... Next term I’m going to do the compulsory Unit A, the Level 3 with them. And I’ve finished them.
The following year, if I’m still around, I would like to do Level 3 Certificate III with them.

IN: Very good. So you’re pathwaying them, within.
RANI: Yes.

IN: I mean, because of the way you teach, if you think it’s suitable for them, then you can go onto Foundation English.
RANI: Yes.

IN: The only thing is they’ve got to speak English.
RANI: Yes. Well, that is what I’ve been doing, if you observe.
IN: I have.
RANI: Because I think we are the feeding system here. We have these courses. Why should they be stagnant? Give them - And I tell them all, ‘You do this, you come’. It’s boring for me, and boring for them.
IN: And for them. Yes.
RANI: If I put a challenge into it. Like from my Foundation English. Just look at the work they do.
IN: …… for English now.
RANI: It’s incredible. And I feel a sense of satisfaction in knowing these who couldn’t write. And now they’re into debating issues.
IN: I know. No. I’m very impressed with their tasks.
RANI: Thank you.
IN: Yes. Yes. No matter what Kevin said. ‘The class can only go downhill from here’, he said.
RANI: No.
IN: ……… I know you’ve brought a lot out of them.
RANI: I love that class. I love teaching.
IN: Yes. It’s nice though, the challenge between having beginners, which you’ve done for a long time. And then suddenly you’re doing what you’ve taught in the past, at a higher level.

Comment [IN2696]: Pathways
Comment [IN2697]: ACE-the feeding system (pathways)
Comment [IN2698]: Not stagnant
Comment [IN2699]: Incredible progress
Comment [IN2700]: ACE teacher-loves class
Comment [IN2701]: ACE teacher-loves teaching
RANI: See next year I’ll be - This lot, if some of them are good in Foundation.
And I’ll do VCE literature. You know what I mean?

IN: Yes. Yes.

RANI: So more expanding and demanding of ……normally they’ll shy away from that level of ……..

IN: Exactly. And it in a way too, it gives you a different perspective as a teacher. Because you think ‘Well at least I’m not bored doing CSWE every year at the same school’.

RANI: Oh. I am enjoying it. Because I’ve always taught at that level.

IN: That’s what I mean. Do you remember, you said ‘No’ initially? Remember?

RANI: Yes.

IN: So perhaps we -

RANI: Because I thought I won’t be able to achieve that. I thought I couldn’t challenge them to achieve that. But when I know that they can. And then I push them further.

IN: Yes. Oh no. That’s lovely, isn’t it?

RANI: Yes.

IN: I’ve just - I’ve got a lot of questions here that are actually for different groups if you have a look. But the first ones are rather general. The next lot’s for students. You probably -

RANI: It is eleven years.

IN: Eleven years. And you’ve already answered the others such as ‘Were you ever at TAFE or university. And the differences and the, you know. What would you say are the biggest influences on ACE since you started?

As in external.

RANI: Externally. Now ACE has something, variety of courses that appeal to the people. And when I first came in course offering were thoroughly limited. Now they’ve just mushroomed. They do so many different courses which draws people, particularly in computers, I notice. It draws the people to them, you know.

IN: Yes. Do you think the pressure has been outside or inside from ACE to change? Do you think it’s under pressure to change ACE?
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1599 RANI: I think so.
1600 IN: Yes. OK. And where do you think it’s actually coming from?
1601 RANI: I think it’s coming from the department itself.
1602 IN: OK.
1603 RANI: Because I feel Lyn Kosky’s vision is to convert ACE into a mini-TAFE.
1604 IN: You think that’s really the aim?
1605 RANI: I think so.
1606 IN: Without providing money.
1607 RANI: Under the umbrella of ………. Because we are not important enough.
1608 IN: Yes. And yet we’re important enough to deliver TAFE courses. But not
to get the money. That’s it, isn’t it?
1609 RANI: No. They need the money to get more and more recognized and I think -
1610 IN: ……….. ACFE ……….. Yes. Yes. So less money.
1611 RANI: Why don’t you give us some money and see how we run it? How
successfully we can run it.
1612 IN: If you’ll fund it like a TAFE. Pay the higher fees, you know, a decent
amount to tutors.
1613 RANI: That’s right.
1614 IN: Have enough money over to make our building safe.
1615 RANI: Yes. If they don’t do, increase the pay, then soon they’ll lose a lot of
tutors from the sector.
1616 IN: You know, we manage to keep the people who have another reason for
teaching.
1617 RANI: Yes.
1618 IN: As - people like you.
1619 RANI: I am in the twilight years of my life. To me, I mean, while the money is
important I don’t think -
1620 IN: You don’t have little children or anything.

MJC
RANI: Yes. And I think that what I earn is for my pleasure.

IN: Yes.

RANI: I don’t have a mortgage to pay or children to educate. So why would I stress about it? Because I love being connected with people coming and being involved in something I love.

IN: And creating that mini-community.

RANI: That’s right.

IN: Because that’s what you’re doing all the time. And those who’ve perhaps got schoolage children are attracted to it. Aren’t they? Because they can have the holidays.

RANI: Yes. Yes.

IN: There’s a flexibility.

RANI: Yes. And they come because they can be with their children during -

IN: Yes.

RANI: And that is now my class make-up. I’m getting more younger women coming into the class. Which is a good thing.

IN: Yes. It is, isn’t it?

RANI: It’s a good thing.

IN: Well, have you got any other comment you’d like to make, or anything? Just questions about what I’m doing or -

RANI: Yes. I’m just thinking of, you know, like ACE, getting back to ACE. Who is going to do the bargaining for these issues that’s coming up?

IN: Yes.

RANI: I want to ask you. OK. You collect all this information you’re going to put it in your dissertation. And what happens to the research?

IN: Well, I have no idea. You know what happens to research quite often is that it just goes on a shelf somewhere. And no-one worries about it again.

RANI: But I think this is an important research. And I think a copy of this should be sent to - this is my suggestion.

IN: Yes. No. I’m taking it on board. A copy to -
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1699 RANI: A copy to head office, ACFE and to the Minister herself.
1701 IN: Yes.
1703 RANI: The reason why I am stating this is simply because I think you’re going to get a lot of pertinent views expressed by many people. And you’re going to get a whole spectrum of argument offered. And then you’re going to sum it up and analyze it. And you’re going to present it and say ‘These are the issues, perhaps these could come out of it’.
1709 So as ACE sector is the nerve centre initially of the community before they blossom and go further. Why should the place be neglected?
1713 If some sort of enthusiasm could be directed in funding and, you know, we are concerned for ACE, maybe we would offer a much enriched environment. With happy people tutoring and students.
1721 And then they can then step out as I say, this is a slice, a vision into what Australian life is like, you know. The many colours, you know, the synchronization is woven into a very colourful carpet of multicultural -
1725 You know?
1727 IN: That’s a lovely term.
1730 RANI: Yes. And then that synchronization can be personified in the broader, you know, the community.
1732
1734 IN: Yes.
1736 RANI: You know. And this is what I believe, that if this is done, then they will think this is the ‘kinder.’, you know, before they get into ……
1738
1739 IN: The beginning of the pathway.
1741 RANI: And you cannot neglect this because this is where people come first, before they go further. Don’t you think?
1745 IN: That’s excellent.
1747 RANI: I really feel sincerely about this. Because I often think about it and say, like in my case, I have another year perhaps.
1751 IN: You’ve been saying that for about the last three years.
1753 RANI: …………….
1755 IN: Hang in there. Hang in there.
1757 RANI: But that is -
1761 IN: But I’ll make a commitment if it gets through and gets passed.
RANI: It will.

IN: I will make sure I ask people if they’d like a copy to go …. And I’ll send it ….

RANI: And ask them, I want this study and research to reach where it matters.

IN: OK.

RANI: Because they need to have a look at it. All this planning and everything is OK, but a touch of sincerity and a sense of purpose and direction is important. That’s my opinion about it. I’ve written two dissertations.

IN: Oh.

RANI: And what happened?

IN: They’ve gone on a shelf somewhere.

RANI: Yes. In Wellington University.

IN: My Masters would have been the same, it ended up on a shelf somewhere.

RANI: Exactly. Yes.

IN: So I’ll make a commitment to doing that.

RANI: And say this is what one of the interviewees said, suggested.

IN: Suggested. Or the other thing I could then do is write it up. You know, smaller article.

RANI: Yes. Definitely.

IN: Yes. All the -

RANI: Because definitely the funding must improve for the ACE sector, you know.

IN: Yes.

RANI: Otherwise, you know, how we are ….., how completely thin, how paralyzed we’ve been. We want to do more. We want to offer courses that appeal to people. But, you see, how can I? There’s no money in it. No money to stretch within.

IN: That’s right.

RANI: So this …… giving this service to ACE. They’d better look into it with some serious -
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IN: Good. Oh. No. I agree with you. That’s very good.

RANI: Anything else at all?

IN: No. That’s lovely. Thank you very much for your comments and I’ll have it copied and get it back to you. I promise faithfully I’ll - No. That was everything I wanted. Thank you.

RANI: …… Because I really believe in the work I’m doing.

IN: I know. That’s lovely. Thank you very much.

RANI: And I’m glad I’m an ACE.

IN: And I’m glad you are too. Thank you.
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IN: Interview with Steve the 12th January 2003 at Coburg

Thanks for coming for the interview, Steve. Uh. Remember you can ask questions, refuse to answer or stop at any time. You can just press that little button there if you’d like to stop it. Um. I want you to feel you’re participating in the interview. OK? And maybe interview you again at another time if you’re happy about that.

STEVE: Good.

IN: So would you mind giving me a brief outline of your secondary schooling, just to start?

STEVE: Well, I - went to Moreland High School, which was in Coburg. And - Ah. Well, I can’t say it was a very pleasant experience. The - Um - I found what they were teaching was probably two years behind what everyone else was teaching. So I’d already learnt it at the primary school I went to. There was also a lot of violence there. And - Um - Yeah. Being a very multicultural school, with a lot of different personalities in the school. So - Yeah. I saw everybody was getting their HSC or getting through to Year 12, wasn’t able to get any university places or anything. They were basically going to work in K Mart or anything like that. And I really couldn’t see myself doing that. So in Year 10 I left school to start my apprenticeship in cooking. So I got myself a job and started my apprenticeship which involved three years of TAFE.

IN: And where did you do your apprenticeship?

STEVE: Um. Well, I did it through William Angliss College. And they had a campus - Well, they had - Um - Had usage of Brighton High School, of which I did two years there. And that was - Um. Yeah. That taught me a fair bit. Not as much as what I learned on the job. But it taught me a fair bit.

It was just a high school with basic domestic ovens and everything, that they were using. And in my third year I went to William Angliss in the city. And that was a TAFE specifically set up for the hospitality training of apprentices and managers and everything. So they had a big commercial kitchen, commercial equipment and everything. It was - Yeah. No. It was really good.

IN: And did you find that a more positive experience than your secondary schooling?

STEVE: Oh. Most definitely. I mean. Yeah. Oh. I was really enjoying the cooking. And I found the teachers were really - Giving a lot of input and everything.

IN: And you never had problems with the reading, writing or learning of your courses? So it wasn’t actually a literacy or learning problem you had?

STEVE: No. No.

IN: No.

STEVE: No. I left to start an apprenticeship just because I saw that, you know, there - The high school I was going to wasn’t really giving the education you needed to go on to do anything great. And I enjoyed eating. And I had a crush on my cooking teacher. So I thought I’ll go - Go try cooking.

IN: Good. Um. Now have you ever been to a university?

STEVE: Uh. Yeah. A couple of years ago, ’98, ’99. I had the opportunity to go to Melbourne Uni. It was really a back door scheme in a Mature Age Bridging Scheme. And spent a few months there in ’98, and a few months in ’99. Um. And - Yeah. I found that a big eye-opening experience. I mean, I really enjoyed the courses I chose, and the Arts Department. Doing Art History and Contemporary Writing, Philosophy and everything.

But I found it very elitist. I found all the lecturers were really very hard to approach. They weren’t very open to helping you. They thought their time was just way too important to help people.
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But that was one of the negatives. But, of course, the positive was their wonderful libraries and resources and everything.

And apart from William Angliss, you’ve been to a TAFE as well?

Yeah. I did a Certificate IV in - Um - Electronic Publishing. At RMIT in Brunswick. And - Um - It was one of the biggest schools for printing in the southern hemisphere. So to work with some of the equipment there, which ran into the millions, it was really good.

And the teachers there were very approachable as well. They come from the printing industry background so they were very blue collar. Very open, willing to help you. The door was open anytime for you to wander in and just have a chat. So - No. That - I definitely found RMIT a lot better experience than I had at university.

IN: And you've been to an ACE organisation as well?

Well, it's what started me off. Really. I mean, my daughter was born, and I started wanting to get a bit of an education that I’d missed out on, on leaving school, the school I went to.

So I went to my local Community Centre. And they said, ‘Oh. No problem’. And they put me on track. They got me into Melbourne Uni., which was very lucky I realize now.

Because that whole scheme only ran for a few years. They’ve stopped it. And they helped me with direction and, you know, how to get back into schooling and everything like that. No. They were great.

IN: That was before the RMIT course?

Yeah. Well, that was before everything. And then I just - I had no idea on how to get back into education. What I wanted to do and everything like that. So I went to Moreland Adult Education centre and spoke to their co-ordinator. They had some ideas and enrolled me in the Diploma of Further Education. And I did the Certificate IV in Workplace Training with them and the Certificate II on-line, which was through RMIT. But they helped with all the tutoring and everything like that. Yeah. No. They were great.

IN: That was the main difference you’d see between, say, ACE and TAFE or even ACE and university? What would you - What do you think the main difference, positive or negatives? You know?

Well, definitely the human element. Very - At the ACE organisation, they’re non-judgmental. They’re very open to help you. And - Yeah. No. They were great.

Whereas Melbourne Uni. I found were a bit stand-offish and - Um - They weren’t as open. Um. I don’t know, maybe that’s because of the class sizes. I don’t know. But - Yeah. No.

The ACE really helped me on a more personal level as well. Going through a few difficulties, a car accident and things like that.

And TAFE TAFE was good. They were very good there. I enjoyed that experience really well too.

And so the main difference you’re seeing in people and facilities?

Mm.

IN: They’re the main things you’ve mentioned.

Yeah. Well, definitely. I mean, the ACE and the ACE place. Ace place (laughs)

IN: Yeah. (laughs)

MJC
Interview with Steve 12th January, 2003

STEVE: Can’t really compare to the amount of money RMIT or Melbourne Uni. are getting. But I mean, for facilities and resources and things like that. But - No. They’re the sort of things you can get anywhere if you look. But the personal kind of contact and help, it just really helps you along.

IN: Well, thank you for that.

STEVE: No worries.

IN: Are you sure you’ve got no questions?

STEVE: Um.

IN: Anything you would like to state, say, you know …. ?

STEVE: Not at this particular time.

IN: OK. Well, I might talk to you again later. Thank you.

STEVE: No worries.

IN: Thanks for that.

STEVE: Thank you.
IN: Interview with Tom 20th August 2003 (Part 2)

Oh. Thank you for this interview, Tom. Um. Remember you can stop talking anytime or you can ask questions. And if you’d like to stop the interview, you just press that button.

TOM: No problem.

IN: OK. Um. Can you tell me a bit about yourself? Like where you were born and about your family.

TOM: Was born in Australia. Ah. My family is all Anglo. Ah. Went to a primary school in Coburg and I went to a high school in Northcote.

IN: And brothers and sisters or?

TOM: Ah. My brothers and sisters, they - What did you want to know about my brothers and sisters?

IN: Oh. I just wanted a bit of general stuff about your family.

TOM: Two sisters and one brother. They’re all older than myself. Um. Yeah.

IN: And can you describe your early school years, please?

TOM: My early school years. Um. In primary school, I spent my time at a local primary school. It’s a State school, not a private school. I spent most of my time - Enjoyed a lot of Maths and English type subjects when I was in primary school. And had to look for a high school towards the end there. And looked in my local area. There weren’t many options for high schools in my local area once I finished primary school.

IN: So where did you go?

TOM: Where did I go? I went to Northcote High.

IN: OK. And how long ago did you get involved in ACE? You know that ACE is Adult Community Education?

TOM: Yes. Um. I was involved in ACE quite a while ago. I’ve been around the traps for a while now. Ah. Mainly in volunteer roles as well as getting some courses done through ACE. Uh. Yeah.

IN: OK. And what made you get involved?

TOM: Uh. What made me get involved? Just - Uh. The ease and the ability just to get into the courses that you want. And very short courses. Um. My mother was involved in ACE organisations. And she prompted me to go and have a look and check them out.

IN: And how would you have described ACE when you first became involved? Now I know that was years ago, when you were a little boy.

TOM: Ah ha.

IN: Um. Did you - Would you have - How would you have described it then? When you were involved.

TOM: Um. It seemed -

IN: Yeah. Go on.
Interview with Tom, 20th Aug 2003 (2 sections)

TOM: It seemed a lot smaller in the community. Ah. It wasn’t a really big sort of organisation. Most of the dealings I had with it were just in smaller type groups. Just running simple type courses.

IN: I remember you coming to our Christmas parties every year when you were little.

TOM: Yes. That’s right.

IN: Could you tell us how you found those?

TOM: They were quite interesting. To see the diverse range of people who go to ACE. And the quite strange, some of the people there. And a lot of them were quite nice. And it was just different to see a different section of the community.

IN: OK. How would you describe ACE now?

TOM: ACE now. Um. It’s a little bit bigger than I thought it used to be. They do a lot more things. They’re involved in VCE a lot more than I remembered they used to be. Um. They’re a lot more involved in getting people into things like university courses and various places like that.

IN: OK. Do you see any major differences?

TOM: What sort of major differences?

IN: Oh. Just anything that pops into your brain. You know, if you compare how it was when you used to see as a little kid to Christmas parties and things. And now.

TOM: There’s all more involvement in computers and areas like that. There’s a lot more things that teaching people how to use computers and getting the community just using things like the Internet. And various aspects like that.

IN: OK. Um. How would you describe a TAFE? If I said to you, you know, how - You know, what’s a TAFE? Just what pops into your head.

TOM: Uh. TAFE is - To me is something similar to Uni. It’s not much difference. It’s a little bit more hands-on than a university degree. Um. If you go to a TAFE, they offer a more diverse range of things. You can do hospitality type things more than just the straight theory-based courses that universities offer. That’s how I would imagine a TAFE.

IN: And how would you describe ACE? What is ACE?

TOM: ACE. ACE to me is educating the community. It’s - Um. Getting people out there and showing them the different things that they can do. Um. It’s giving people an opportunity, who wouldn’t want to go to perhaps a TAFE or a university, because they’re intimidated by the learning system.

IN: Can you name one positive and one negative thing you’ve noticed in ACE?

TOM: Um. A positive is the diverse range of people, they’re not discriminatory in any way. They accept quite a wide variety of people. Um. One of the bad things is just not quite having the structure of corporate environment. Being - working in a lot of private companies myself, I was experienced in the type of structure they have. And just seeing that behind the scenes of how community type organisations run. They don’t seem as well structured or as focused as others. And they seem to - Yeah.

IN: Good. And can you give one positive and one negative about TAFE? If you haven’t been to TAFE you might not -
TOM: Yeah. I haven’t really been to TAFE but perhaps a positive is again they’re willing to accept a lot of people that may not make it into the university courses they want. Or they’re a side way into university. So if people don’t get the TER score that they’re looking for, they can end up getting through it by different means. Um.

And one negative is perhaps some of the TAFE courses are a little bit of a waste of time. They’ve found - They’ve, a few people I know that have gone to TAFE, have said that it was useless and they didn’t learn anything at all.

IN: Oh. Thank you. And you were a student. Um. For a short while.

TOM: Yes.

IN: In ACE. What did you study?

TOM: Uh. I studied “Teaching Small Groups” or “Learn Small Groups”. I’ve forgotten the exact terminology.

IN: Train.

TOM: ‘Train Small Groups’. That would be the one. Um. I just wanted a bit more business involved in something to add to my CV. And it was a good opportunity to get that sort of qualification.

IN: Who did you train?

TOM: Who did I train? Um. Do you mean the type of people that I trained or? Yeah. Basically the type of people that I trained were an older group of ladies in - Um. Using computers and a PowerPoint presentation type system. Um. I had to design the instruction manuals, and take them through, and step them through slowly in how to design their pieces of work.

IN: And what made you choose to go to the ACE instead of a TAFE to do the course? Because it is a TAFE course.

TOM: Yes. Um. The thing that attracted me to ACE was being - That it was fairly low in cost. That definitely attracted me. And - Um. Just the approachability and the flexibility. Because I was working full-time, I could sort of arrange to go at my leisure. Or if I couldn’t get that week, I wasn’t being persecuted or felt like I wasn’t able to go. So it was a bit more flexible than what I know about TAFE.

IN: And have you gone to a TAFE or a university? As being part of the ACE organisation.

TOM: Um. While I was involved in ACE I was in university as well. So I have been to university. I studied at RMIT doing a Bachelor of Business Information Systems. Ah. Yeah.

IN: And you’re now at work?

TOM: And I’m now working full-time.

IN: Excellent. Well, thank you for that. Ah. If you don’t mind I might ask you some other questions later.

TOM: That’s fine.

IN: If I find I need to.

TOM: No problem.
Interview with Tom, 20th Aug 2003 (2 sections)

IN: And - Um. Thanks again.

TOM: No problem. Thank you.

IN: Oh. Jim. I forgot to ask you about your volunteer activities. What sort of volunteer work have you been doing up there, over the years?

TOM: Um. Lately I’ve been helping out with the computer systems. Just because I’m involved in computers and that’s my career field. I just assist in any way possible, whether it’s running cables or setting up a few computers for the students to use. Um. That was my main involvement lately.

IN: And what would you find - What would you think is the benefit of you doing volunteer work?

TOM: Um. Again everything. It’s sort of putting back into the community that helped you. It allows you to then go back and do some more courses, if you wanted to in the future. Such as the ‘Train Small Groups’ that I did. Um. I can always go back and feel that they’ll still be around, if I put in a little bit of effort, and help them out as much as I can.

IN: Thank you for that.

TOM: No problem.

Finish Tape 1

Tape 2 Continued Interview with T

IN: Interview with T.

Now T, you know you can stop this interview at any time and decide, if you decide you don’t want to go ahead with it. And I’ll have it typed up and, um, you can mark out anything you were sorry you said or you’d rather wasn’t said. OK?

T: Yeah. Sure.

IN: Can you tell me a bit about yourself? Like where you were born, and about your family.

T: Ah. I was born in Melbourne. So I pretty much lived my whole life in Melbourne. Um. My family, I was always the baby. I was considered the young one so I was always very spoilt as a kid and always got lots of good birthday and Christmas presents. Which I considered was very lucky of me.

Um. My grandmother always used to say that I was a very lucky child, being the youngest one. And all my brothers and sisters always loved me lots. Which probably helped me in later life.

IN: Good. And what do you think helped make you the person you were? You’ve said about being the baby. But, anything else? You know in terms of personality and all those things. Anything pops into your head or not?

T: Um. Well. There was a few things. The fact that - Um. When I was younger I always used to - My sister, being a lot older than me, and me being a young, little kid, still in primary school used to always invite me around to her house to go and stay. And I always used to look forward to those times when I’d go over there and, you know, spend the night watching videos and stuff like that. And my brother always used to take me out in his little station wagon thing, and drive around and take me to the movies and different things like that. And take me to movies that my Mum probably wouldn’t want me to see.

MJC

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Interview with Tom, 20th Aug 2003 (2 sections)

IN: (Laughs)
T: So -
IN: When you were only little?
T: When I was only little. When I was a little kid. We’d watch all the violent actiony flicks that little boys want to go and see. (Laughs)
IN: Yeah. Right. And how did you feel about your growing up period? You know, when you were growing up.
T: Ah. I was very lucky in everything that I always did. I – I’ve always managed to coast through life without too many difficulties being thrown my way. Um. A lot of things in schooling and everything, I’ve always found quite easy myself. So I don’t think I’ve faced too many major challenges in life that have adversely affected me.
IN: And what about your primary schooling? Where did you go for your primary?
T: Ah. I went to a local primary school. Just a couple of blocks around.
IN: State?
T: It was a State school. Yep. Moreland Primary. Um. Yeah. And because I lived in the area I used to know a few kids there. Always enjoyed schooling and had no dramas with the -
IN: You got on with the kids?
T: With the kids. Yeah. Got on with all the kids. And a lot of the kids were from different backgrounds to me. Which sort of helped me get along with a lot of different backgrounds being in an area like Moreland, there was a lot of Muslim type kids. And always got along really well with a lot of those guys and knock about with them.
IN: Lots of friends. And secondary, you were positive about that too?
T: Yeah. I went on to secondary school and, um, continued on my conscientious ways of doing my best throughout my schooling.
IN: Yeah. You went to a State or private school?
T: Another State school, for secondary school. It wasn’t quite in my local area. It was a bit out of my way. But had to catch a tram and a bus to get in to high school there.
IN: Good. And you went to university, didn’t you?
T: Yeah. That’s right. I went to RMIT into the City.
IN: OK. And did you do a Business degree?
T: Bachelor of Business in Information Systems. So -
IN: And you’re employed?
T: That’s right. I’ve been employed since I finished my degree. Haven’t had a period of unemployment.

IN: OK. And home? When you were at home do you feel that there were books and things like that around that, you know, gave you a feeling that, of studying or not?

T: There were always books around my house I used to pick up. And I never used to be a big bookworm child, but would just read anything at all that was going around. Um. I used to be fairly selective in what I read and I went through periods where I liked fiction. But as I’ve gone later in life I’ve enjoyed a bit more of the non-fiction rather reading fictional type books. So but - Yeah. They’ve always been accessible and there’s always been access for me to go to libraries to get research material if I’ve needed to, or even to my local library, not just the libraries at school and so on.

IN: And would you describe your schooling years then as positive or negative?

T: Very positive.

IN: Very positive.

T: I had very few bad experiences in my schooling career. My worst experiences were breaking my arm or I think I broke my finger as well. I’ve had a few broken bones. Had a gashed head. But that’s to be expected being a boy running around, running riot.

IN: …… little boy.

And just tell me, um, where or how you found out about ACE. You know ACE is Adult Community Education?

T: I found out about it mainly through my family. Um. A lot of them, they’re heavily involved in it. Ah. My mother’s been involved in ACE for many, many years. Since I was very small, I can barely remember. Um. So I’ve always been around ACE and I used to go to things like their Christmas parties and whatever events like that. So I’ve always been semi-involved and but not fully-involved in ACE.

IN: Good. Thank you. Um. I know you’ve only got a short time now so would you mind continuing this another time if we - ?

T: Sure. No problems.
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