

Community Colleges Australia The Year in Review 2017

By Don Perlgut, CEO

Introduction

This report covers CCA's activities during the 12 month period January 2017 through December 2017, including policy development, CCA and other community education sector events, other events and presentations, highlights of the year, strategic partnerships, representation, member visits, communications and the challenges ahead.

Policy Development

In February 2017, CCA published the report, *The Role of Community Education in Australian Regional and Rural Economic Development*, which included policy and recommendations to the Commonwealth, state and territory governments ([link to policy paper](#)).

CCA's policy on TAFE and Community Education was released in April, and submitted to the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments and TAFE Directors Australia ([link to Policy](#)).

In April, CCA also provided a submission to NSW Deputy Premier & the NSW Department of Industry on Community Service Obligation (CSO) funding for NSW Community Colleges ([link to submission](#)).

In August, CCA provided a submission to the Review of the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (NVETR) Act 2011 ([link to Submission](#)); as well as Supplementary Submission to the Review on "Marketing and Naming" ([link to submission](#)).

In September, CCA provided a submission on "Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Students of NSW Community Education Providers: Analysis of Participants in Government-Funded VET 2016", to NSW Deputy Premier and the NSW Department of Industry – ([link to submission](#)).

CCA and Sector Events

CCA's Melbourne Conference (24-26 July) at the Windsor and Citadines Hotels had more than 100 attendees and heard from:

- Keynote addresses by Commonwealth Assistant Skills Minister Karen Andrews MP, Victorian Education and Training Minister Gayle Tierney MP, and Labor Shadow Skills Minister Senator Doug Cameron.
- Other speakers, Susan Pascoe AM, Commissioner, Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission; Professor Peter Noonan, Victoria University; The Hon Michael Lavarch AO, Commissioner, Australian Skills and Quality Authority (ASQA); Lynn Glover, CEO (Director), Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority (VRQA); Professor Rodney Maddock, CEDA and Monash University; Professor Erica Smith, Federation University Australia; Emma Dawson, Per Capita; Dr Laurie Chesley, Grand Rapids Community College, USA, and Dr Robera Teahen, Ferris State University, USA; Sarah Davies, CEO, Philanthropy Australia; David Pearson, The Don Dunstan Foundation, University of Adelaide; and speakers from Malaysia and New Zealand.

- “Student of the Year Award” announcement (see below) and Keynote dinner speaker, Anzac Leidig, Aboriginal tennis coach with Evonne Goolagong Foundation.
- Conference sponsors and exhibitors included Coverforce Insurance, Hill Rogers Accountants and Auditors, Audit Express, ish on course, Training Resource Solutions, VET Development Centre, Copyright Agency, Rural Skills Australia and Watsonia Publishing.

CCA’s Regional and Rural Economic Development Forum, at Byron Community College’s Mullumbimby campus in October, highlighted CCA’s research project in regional economic development. Attendees included staff and Board Directors from Byron Community College, WEA Hunter, Central Coast Community College, Port Macquarie Community College, Tamworth Community College, Coffs Coast Community College, North Coast Community College and ACE Colleges, Lismore; Regional Development Australia; TAFE NSW; the University of New England; Southern Cross University; Sourdough Business Pathways; SAE Institute; and two members of Parliament - The Hon Ben Franklin MLC, Parliamentary Secretary for Northern New South Wales (representing the NSW Deputy Premier) and Tamara Smith, Member for Ballina. CCA’s regional development report will be released in early February 2018, with numerous recommendations.

Other sector events that CCA ran or participated in during 2017 included:

- Marketing workshop for marketing managers and CEOs, February.
- NSW CEO “Professional Conversations”, February.
- NSW VET Managers meeting, Sydney, March.
- NSW CEO “Professional Conversations”, April.
- Cooperative Learning Ltd meeting, Gold Coast, April.
- “Community Education Conversations” professional development, Melbourne, May, hosted by Audit Express.
- Professional development training for CEOs and Board Chairs led by Ty Wiggins, June, Sydney.
- Presentation at Alesco Learning Australia Conference, WEA Hunter, Newcastle, June.
- Consultation on regional economic development at Western College, Dubbo, October.
- Cooperative Learning Ltd meeting, Port Macquarie, October.
- “Building Digital Capacity” masterclass for CCA members, November.
- NSW CEO “Professional Conversations”, and CCA AGM, November.

Other Events and Presentations

- Presentation to NSW Department of Industry State Training Services Regional Managers, February.
- Participated in Labor’s National Skills Summit, Canberra, March.
- Presentation on "Community Education in an Age of VET Uncertainty: Trends, Policies and Opportunities," at Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA) Annual Conference, Melbourne, April.
- Presentation on “Community Education: The 'Passing Gear' of Australian Rural and Regional VET", NCVET Conference, Hobart, July.
- Presentation on "Inequality in Australia: What can vocational education and training do?" Australian Conference of Economists: Economics for Better Lives, Sydney, July.
- Presentation on "Leveraging Regional Development through VET", TAFE Directors Australia Convention, Adelaide, September.

Other Highlights of the Year

The NSW Department of Industry [confirmed a large increases in support](#) to the community education sector in June for the 2017/18 financial year, including:

- an increase in Community Service Obligation (CSO) funding;
- a new “Tech Savvy for Small Business” program (\$1.8million);
- new professional development and IT funding for members; and
- new “Thin Market” grants of \$100,000 for five outer regional and remote members.

Community Education Student of the Year Award: Jolie Kaja, a refugee from the Congo and student at Coffs Coast Community College, was named “Community Education Student of the Year Award” Winner, at CCA’s Annual Conference in Melbourne, and was later honoured by NSW Deputy Premier the Hon John Barilaro at Coffs Harbour, [with news coverage by SBS TV](#), in August. Julia Chant, small businesswoman and student at Byron Community College, received an honourable mention in the Awards.

Board of Directors: In November, four new Directors joined CCA’s Board of Directors – Ron Maxwell (VERTO), Valerieanne Byrnes (Port Macquarie Community College), John O’Neill (Deaf Society) and Jennifer Aldred (Sydney Community College). They joined continuing Directors David Fuller (WEA Illawarra & CCA Chair), Michelle Simpson (Tamworth Community College & CCA Deputy Chair), Theresa Collignon (Macquarie Community College & CCA Treasurer) and Danielle Bensley (Parramatta College). Retiring Directors were David Martin (Western Riverina Community College) and Joneen Troup (Camden Haven Community College), as well as Julie Neeson (Southern Grampians Community College), who departed in June.

CCA’s audio podcast [governance professional development](#) resource for CEOs and Boards of Directors were completed and launched in December.

During the year, CCA also adopted a Code of Ethics for Members ([link to code](#)), and Policy Manager Evelyn Goodwin participated as a judge in the Australian National Training Awards, held in Canberra.

Strategic Partnerships

CCA deepened its strategic relationships with NSW Department of Industry, Victorian Department of Education and Training, TAFE Directors Australia, Community Council for Australia (which we call the “other CCA”), Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), South Australian Community Centres Association, South Australian Department of State Development, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), Per Capita think tank, Soldier On (services to veterans), Regional Development Australia, Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, Adult Learning Australia, Coverforce Insurance Brokers (which signed for another three years of annual sponsorship), Victorian Department of Regional Development, Skills IQ, Australian Institute of Company Directors and PwC’s Skills for Australia.

CCA worked closely with a number of consultants, including Wendy Perry, Workforce Blueprint; Ty Wiggins, Converge Consulting; and Michelle Walker, Curious Minds.

Representation

During 2017, CCA maintained active representation on the following groups and committees:

- Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) Provider Roundtable, chaired by the ASQA Chief Commissioner;
- NSW Department of Industry CCA Reference Group, which includes seven CCA members;
- VET Student Loans Implementation Advisory Group, Australian Government Department of Education and Training;
- NSW Skills Board's Provider Reference Group, supported by the NSW Department of Industry;
- Training Product Reform Joint Working Party, Australian Government Department of Education and Training;
- Victorian ACE Peak Organisations Network, which collaborates on areas of policy to advance adult and community education in Victoria; and
- Reading and Writing Hotline National Steering Committee.

Member Visits

CCA staff visited 15 member organisations during 2017: ACE Community Colleges Lismore, Bankstown Community College, Byron Community College, Coffs Coast Community College, Lalor Learning and Living Centre (Melbourne), Macquarie Community College, Mosman Community College, Nepean Community College (Penrith), North Coast Community College (Alstonville), Parramatta College, Port Macquarie Community College, Robinson College (Broken Hill), WEA Hunter, WEA Sydney and Western College (Dubbo).

Communications

During the last 12 months CCA:

- maintained a dynamic website updated many times each week;
- sent 20 newsletters to members;
- sent 13 newsletters to non-members and other stakeholders;
- issued 63 news releases (see <https://cca.edu.au/news/>);
- had 13 mentions in the press and radio; and
- published 11 "comments" (blog posts) on the website.

Financial Performance

CCA posted a modest deficit for the financial year ending 30 June 2017 (\$9,490, on a total income of \$419,908), compared to prior year surplus of \$50,324. As of 30 June 2017, CCA had \$123,141 in Retained Earnings and \$332,564 in Current Assets. Revenue from membership payments (which comprise just 37% of CCA's annual revenue), conference attendance (held in October 2016; the July 2017 conference will be reflected in 2017/18 accounts) and special projects were all lower in the 2016/17 financial year than the previous year. However, the revenue drop was offset by lower expenses.

An increase in wages and staff-related expenses reflects the recruitment and presence of a full new team to increase CCA's advocacy, influence and membership opportunities. In addition to Don Perlgut as CEO, Anne Walter is our Operations Manager and Evelyn Goodwin our Manager VET Policy and Projects. All other expenses were in line with budget and the prior year and are managed carefully given CCA's funding environment. The financial outlook for financial year ending 30 June 2018 has improved with the signing of a service level agreement with the NSW Department of Industry and receipt of a number of grants.

The Challenges Ahead

Challenges facing CCA in the coming year include:

- Ensuring that our members are kept updated, empowered and receive proper funding and recognition for their efforts;
- Representing our sector to governments in ways that make a difference;
- Getting our voice “heard” in a very active media landscape with many well-funded and loud organisations, and branding our sector as dynamic, effective and worthy of support;
- Maximising our strategic partnerships to fulfil our strategic goals;
- Maintaining and extending services to members with limited staff and resources;
- Diversifying our sources of income through sponsorship, grants and donations so that we can continue to represent the sector dynamically; and
- Increasing our membership base.

[Read CCA’s Strategic Plan here.](#)

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Mullumbimby Regional Economic Development Forum, October 2017

