



ABN: 41 587 420 126

Our vision is that action learning, action research & related processes and approaches, are widely used and publicly shared by individuals and groups creating local and global change for the achievement of a more equitable, just, joyful, productive, peaceful and sustainable society

Issue 4, December, 2009

Dear Members,

As the year quickly draws to an end, this newsletter shares with members important information about our association and the good work that is happening in ALAR.

Enjoy with a holiday drink and our best wishes for the New Year.

Margaret Fletcher
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President's message

Greetings to all our members, and a very warm welcome to our many new members.

The fourth newsletter for 2009 comes to you with news of the Management Committee's considerable activities as we count down to the World Congress next year.

On behalf of the Committee I thank our members for electing this committee back into office for another year. Our work is not yet done, but we are working to a position where many of us can hand over to a new Committee at the World Congress.

In the mean time, and on behalf of the Committee, may I wish you all a restful and happy time if you have the opportunity to stop and be with family and friends.

2009 has been a difficult year - but we are surviving and also doing really good work. A brief summary follows.

- The World Congress is well underway with a busy working group meeting fortnightly, keynote speakers secured, the early call for contributions already attracting papers, theme chairs being agreed and setting up networks, sponsorships being sought and found, a team of project officers working to marketing, sponsorship and project delivery plans, and many aligned global networks making contact with the working group to begin the process of developing the themes and the congress program. We express our sincere thanks to the Congress Working Group for their vision and to the many volunteers at Borderlands Co-op for your most valued engagement with this truly timely and inspiring event.
- The Australian National Conference at Borderlands was received with much appreciation by all who attended. We express our sincere thanks to the Conference Working Group members and Borderlands Co-op volunteers for your generosity and contributions of resources to make the event possible. As we have the World Congress happening next year there are no plans for an Australian national conference in 2010.
- Our journal editions continue to educate us, support the development of writers and promote the field – our thanks to contributors and the Publishing Working Group for all your hours of editing, reviewing and production.
- Our website gets better and better and people are increasingly impressed by its functions which are now so well suited to how we like to interact with each other – reflecting the warmth and generosity that is ALARA; our thanks to our Web Coordination Group and to John Seward our web services supplier.
- Our local networks are slowly increasing in number and frequency of meetings despite the difficulties of finding the time to organise and participate in such valued moments with each

other. Our thanks to all our local members and those generous souls who put their hands up to take on the role of presenter, and those who offer to be contact person and event coordinator.

▪ We currently do not have a Special Interest Group Coordinator on the Management Committee; we invite members to consider this role and let us know (email President@alara.net.au) if you are passionate about supporting local network activity across all our Australian states and territories as well as internationally. This role has a huge leadership potential in the lead-up to the World Congress.

We look forward to continuing support of your action learning and action research activities in 2010 – and to being with you at the World Congress.

Susan Goff



The ALARA website opens its doors

After discussion at the AGM, we have decided to open up the discussion areas of the ALARA website to the general public. People interested in conversations going on there between ALARA members will be able to sign up to the website itself, and participate. ALARA members will be able to create topics within discussion groups, and proposed new discussion groups.

ALARA Management Committee activities will be visible to members, but not to members of the general public. Just prior to putting all this in place, we are upgrading the drupal software that runs the website, and making a few improvements to the functions we have already.

You will now find information about the 2010 World Congress on the top navigation bar of the website. The information is rudimentary now, but we will update it as plans for the Congress develop. We also hope to set up discussion groups around the streams of practice presenters will be addressing at the Congress, so that they can set out some of their ideas beforehand, and those coming (or thinking of coming) can get a feel for what will be happening.

Ross Colliver, ALARA Website Coordinator, 0411 226519



Membership fees and our financial sustainability

We have gone through a careful and very long process to change the membership fees. We asked for your vote to give the Management Committee the right to modify fees without having to go to a special general meeting, which was cumbersome and a reason why the fees have not changed for so long. You agreed. We then deliberated for some time because it is a difficult decision to make.

The new fee structure as agreed by the Management Committee (the minutes confirming the decision are available on the website) and inclusive of GST is:

- Full annual subscription \$140
- Student, pensioner, low waged \$95
- Organisational \$500

We are offering a 6-month membership option for people who join from November to March, as our renewal takes place in May each year. As well, our organisational fee may change once we have an organisational policy in place, which our Committee is working on at the moment. We have set these fees in place in time for Early Bird registration for the Congress (March 2010) but the membership forms will reflect them from January of next year.

Our fees have not increased for nine years during which time significant new costs have been taken on in the interests of developing ALARA and providing better services to our members:

- We no longer do our bookkeeping, fee registration and journal postage voluntarily, but employ a casual administrator to carry out these essential tasks
- We have established a web page, which requires professional web services to maintain it (security, upgrades, meeting members' and ALARA's needs)
- The Management Committee is made up of members from all over Australia, which need to communicate using teleconferences to carry out their roles and decision making responsibilities
- The costs of producing and distributing the journal have increased
- The costs of holding conferences and congresses have also increased, and the participation rates have fallen (due to loss of training levies, increased virtual networking, economic downturns, concerns about carbon, and increased alternative networks in action

learning and action research) making them less viable as a major source of income

▪ As well, our membership renewal rate has not grown during the last ten years - although hopefully this is changing.

It is incredible really, that we are still in business – a state that in no small part is due to the generosity of our administrator and webmaster (Donna and John) and the significant voluntary contributions of our members.

As a committee, and with the advice of several other members, we see the value of ALARA as being underserved by our current membership fee rates. We share with many the view that AL and AR are experiencing a resurgence of interest, and we need to present our organisation with a value that reflects our belief in ourselves while also recognising the commitment to access and equity that characterise our organisation. The rates also have to practically contribute to the cost recovery of our outgoings.

We believe that the new fee rates do this.

The fees are a significant source of income and will remain so. To become sustainable we need to collectively participate in increased opportunities to generate more members and increase the value of membership for new and ongoing members. Our members have asked this Committee to address the many threats to our sustainability. This decision to increase fees is one of our responses to this problem.

We are also working on several others:

- The capacity building strategy
- Making the web page public (with secure switches for members-only business) attracting more membership
 - Making the journal electronic
 - Developing our ability to be ambassadors for ALARA to drive membership and significantly increased engagement from non-members on many fronts
- Establishing a trust fund to receive donations and finance ALARA projects
 - Locating the 2010 Congress in Australia
 - Continuing to deliver conferences and congresses but with legally binding and actively reviewed agreements to ensure no loss of funds.

We understand that a fee increase comes with some pain especially as everything else seems

to be increasing in price. We remind our members that when you renew your fees in May 2010, if you also register for the World Congress at the same time you will enjoy a 50% discount rate for the next year with all the same benefits of being a member that you enjoy now.

We hope that this will go some way to ease the pain and also mean that we can enjoy your contributions at the Congress in Melbourne.

Susan Goff
President



AREOL comes to ALARA

ALARA is hosting the next iteration of Areol, action research and evaluation on line, a free on line action research course conducted twice each year by Bob Dick. Conducted over four months or a little less, its 14 sessions (or thereabouts) explore the integration of effective change with rigorous research. On-line sessions are supplemented by archived files on various aspects of action research and evaluation. For a course outline access:

http://ugconnect.net/action_research/areol/areoli.html

To subscribe, send your name and email address to Bob Dick bd@ugconnect.net and ask to be put on the subscriber files.

Ross Colliver

TTDG
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The capacity building strategy

One of my commitments in this third year of my work as president is to try to solve the many threats to our financial sustainability.

We need to make better use of what we have, as we do not have the resources to embark on any major income generating activity outside our current capacity. Whatever we do we have to start small and hopefully put in place long-term changes to the ways we do what we do, which each produce a modest income flow to collectively stabilise ALARA's future.

One of these potential solutions is the capacity building strategy. This idea came from our

- Capacity building in my practice is helping people to develop and refine their innate skills. Similar on a social level it's more professional development work and human resources.
- I think this is a terrific initiative if managed appropriately.
- Events are sometimes being cancelled or postponed and this needs to be clearly understood by the visitors and users to the website. This needs to be managed effectively. I for one do not run events, but a common point to find out what is being run would be good.
- I think people who register who are not ALARA members could be collected and sent information about the importance of ALARA's work. This could be a mandatory requirement for the use of the capacity building section of the website. How would ALARA market this? Who would be the Target Audience?
- We need to start small and look to a long term development where ALARA can nurture innovation in AR and AL in the market place be that community, corporate, public sector or academic
- It would be good to consult members about the ALARA
- No comment
- Ways to support novice / new members are also needed to ensure a sustainable organisation
- Basically it's a good idea, although the Society will have to have a disclaimer - it can't be held liable for the perceived quality of events.
- I like the idea of ALARA acting as a central marketing and booking point in exchange for a fee. I would be interested in promoting my services using this vehicle.
- Capacity building is quite a broad area. It might be a good idea to allow for flexibility in the types of "capacity building" workshops to reflect the wide range of expertise of members.
- Need to promote AL and AR in university, government and other research organisations. The work of key members over recent years in their attempts to promote the work of ALAR should be recognised.
- I might be able to offer a workshop on living systems and AR in different states later next year, although the world congress may be a little all-consuming

Conference news

World Congress Update Date claimer:

Pre congress workshops and meetings etc Saturday 4th -Sunday 5th September

World Congress- Monday 6th-Thursday 9th September, 2010

NB-The venue is no longer Donkeywheel. It is now confirmed at Bayview Eden, a beautiful 1800's mansion overlooking Port Philip Bay in Melbourne. Guests will be offered a variety of accommodation options on their registration for the Congress.

We have received some notes of concern about the carbon cost of international travel to our Congress. We need to let all our members know that the event and all travel to it will be carbon offset, if those registering use the recommended services.

We acknowledge the human contribution to climate change and see that enabling action learners and action researchers to engage face to face at this moment in history is crucially important for future wellbeing.

We have made a measured judgement that the carbon cost of 2-300 plane trips is worth the significant systemic benefits to the planet that we intend this event to set in place.

Please make a note of these dates in you diaries.

A message from the conference organisers:

Hi everyone,

We're the Organising Committee, working hard to have the ALARA World Congress 2010 up and running with sneakers blazing.

Sneak a peak at our photos and have a read of our World Congress roles to catch a glimpse of who we are and what we are up to.

Ensi Anjedani – Host Organising Committee Project Manager, Borderlands volunteer

Ensi has been incredibly busy organising all the ground work, in order to have the World Congress running smoothly and ensuring that all the participants aware of Melbourne's many opportunities. Sponsorships are being sought to support keynote speakers and



financially assist other potential participants to attend. Ensi will also be looking after the logistics of the actual event, such as organising audiovisual equipment and technical support, breakout rooms and meeting points. Accommodation for participants and speakers is being investigated to include varying degrees of affordability. Transport providers are being contacted, deals negotiated, tourism explored and catering thoroughly tasted – all to make the 2010 World Congress a memorable experience for participants.

Ensi has an extensive working history with International Events Management as well as excellent office and administration skills. She is thrilled to be on board, wheeling and dealing and getting the Congress into fabulous order.

Meg Rodaughan – Assistant Extraordinaire, Borderlands volunteer



Totally behind the scenes, Meg is running all over the place getting everything happening! Investigating and encouraging networks to be involved, Meg has been disseminating information high and low all over the globe. From setting up connections with local, interstate and international allied practice networks, to getting in touch with journal editors and publishers, the 8th ALARA World Congress is going to be one connected event!

Meg has been eagerly seeking publisher sponsorships and has been running wild getting much of the administration work done and dusted. Coming from a Social and Community Welfare background, Meg has also majored in Australian Indigenous Studies and previously worked in Koorie Education and support. She has a strong interest in participatory action research and is well fitted to the Congress Organising Committee.

Mish Colla – Design and Promotions Officer, Contracted to the World Congress

With amazing ‘beautifying’ skills, Mish is able to transform ordinary text into stunning promotional designs. Mish has been engaged in all forms of advertising the event, from



newspaper and journal adverts, to flyers and webpage information.

In the coming months, potential participants will be able to easily access congress information on the ALARA website and download audiovisual materials with the theme ‘action learning / action research was..., action learning / action research is....., action learning / action research will be...’. Closer to the event, congress displays, program and show bags will be created to fit the ALARA Congress aesthetic.

This year ALARA is aiming to attract a younger generation of potential participants, while still retaining and expanding the somewhat ‘older’ crew. Through more modern advertising techniques, such as utilizing interacting internet spaces such YouTube, blogs, FaceBook and MySpace, Mish has her eye on getting new faces involved in old(er) places.

Mish is an artist, social worker and has an extensive history in administration. She dreams of a research world where action-research and action-learning is the norm.

Rob Nabben – International Development Stream Coordinator, Borderlands Board member

Collecting, connecting and converging, Rob has set the wheels in motion for the ‘*International Community Development*’ ‘stream’ of the World Congress. For the current (but open to change) streams, see the last announcement on the website!



Rob has been active in putting the feelers out for possible stream coordinators, as well as those who would like to participate in the streams in other manners. Soon, an interactive on-line discussion forum will be available on the ALARA website for each of the streams. This will get the participatory ball rolling for the design of individual streams.

In the not-to-far future, Rob will be helping to review the incoming abstracts/proposals and will be assisting in the sifting-through of submissions to find the cream of the crop.

Rob works in the spaces between the Congress Organising Committee, Deakin University's International Development Masters Degree (an official congress sponsor), and the Borderlands Board.

John Molineux – Financial Officer, ALARA Treasurer



Keeping the congress in the black, John has been maintaining our financial equilibrium. Through developing and maintaining the budget, the congress is ready, set, all systems go!

John is also one of the coordinators of the Systems / Business / Organisational Development stream, which already has quite a number of people at the ready to participate. John will be coordinating the online discussion for this stream (coming soon!) and will be happy to talk AL/AR systems / business with you.

With a working history in the tax system, John is the perfect person to be taking care of the World Congress finances.

Jacques Boulet – Congress Organising Committee Chair, ALARA International Vice President, Borderlands Board member



The 'can do everything' man, Jacques seems like he must have several lives...how else can he possibly get everything he does *done*?

Jacques (with the help of Susie and others) has been seeking out key speakers, getting stream coordinators on board and keeping a well-grounded oversight on the entire lead-up to the Congress. He is a solid cornerstone of the organisation of the event.

With an incredible amount of friends and contacts in the action learning / action research associated fields, Jacques has been able to get the enthusiasm running wild. The Call For Papers recently written by Jacques has been sent out far and wide through the numerous networks and responses are beginning to flow in.

Jacques will be assisting in overseeing the incoming abstracts/proposals, sending them to reviewers and reading a fair few himself.

Jacques is one of the founders of Borderlands Cooperative, has long been an academic, and was Head of the RMIT Social Work Department. He is currently the Head of the oases Graduate School.

ALARA has recently advertised for a second contracted project officer to plan and manage the keynote speakers' and international theme chairs' visits to Australia, extend the search for international sponsorship, and extend the opportunities for marketing the event. We will announce the new team member in our next newsletter.

The first review of the Memorandum of Understanding was undertaken through a conversation between Jacques Boulet and Susan Goff in December. The agreement is being attended to and progressed very effectively with no concerns being identified.

Accordingly a second tranche of funding is being released from ALARA and the Borderlands Co-op to the World Congress Organising Group to support its ongoing work. Members may also be interested to know that Deakin University has also contributed to the World Congress funds.

Contact details: Jacques Boulet
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Reminder- Positive Schools Conference & A Day With Jane Elliott, 20th and 21st May 2010

Venue- The Esplanade Hotel in Fremantle, WA
www.positiveschools.com.au

Email info@positiveschools.com.au



Publications

Submissions to **ALARj** are taken at any time. If you have a submission please send to alar@alara.net.au. ALARA publication

information and submission guidelines can be found at <http://www.alara.net.au/publications>

Monograph Series - Articles Requested for referee and publication

The monograph series provides an opportunity for authors to publish quality refereed work that is more extensive than the length of a conventional paper. Authors thus are expected to present in-depth information and analysis on a topic.

Submission guidelines can be found at <http://www.alara.net.au/publications>

Contact: Associate Professor Eileen Piggot-Irvine, FNZEALS
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ALARA Management Committee, 2008-2009

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