

Our vision is that action learning, action research and 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.

ABN: 41 587 420 126

Issue 1, April 2011



From the President

Welcome to another Newsletter, in a new year already four months old. I seem to be frequently sending messages about natural disasters, with news of floods, earthquakes, and recently twisters in USA. It is good to be able to report on progress in the ALARA domain.

Eileen Piggot-Irvine has produced the first of hopefully many ALARA Monographs, while Susan Goff has had the difficult task of reducing hundreds of pages of articles to a manageable number for the Special Issue of the Journal (see separate articles).

Progress on the World Congress front has stopped, as ALARA and a potential partner in USA could not reach agreement about the conditions for the World Congress. We have approached another group, and I hope to have more news by next Newsletter.

The Australasian Conference, however, is proceeding nicely. Scheduled for late September, it looks like being a great event, so register quickly (as there is a limit to the number of seats available).

ALARA registered the World Congress Proceedings and the Australian Conference Proceedings with the Excellence in Research in Australia (which the Australian Research Council manages). We have to wait for most of this year to hear the results of this process. In the meantime, Susan Goff and I are organising the 2010 World Congress Proceedings, and we should have more news on that in the next Newsletter.

Other activities of the Management Committee have included a new draft Strategic Plan (see below), and preparations for redesigning the website. This latter

task is proving extremely difficult due to ALARA's small budget. The website is the link for all members (and hundreds of others who access ALARA), but producing a new fresh approach that meets today's security needs and user expectations will require a substantial amount of ALARA funds. We will keep you posted on progress.

Colin Bradley
President



ALARA AUSTRALIAN CONFERENCE

Come and join the action learning and action research community!
Australasian Action Learning and Action Research Conference
Brisbane, 26-27 September 2011

ALARA has been running creative, interactive community building conferences for many years now. They are opportunities for new action researchers, including students, to trial a participative process or get feedback on their ideas from an established and supportive community. They are opportunities for

experienced action researchers to support each other in their practice. They are relevant to practitioners in government, business, academic or voluntary organizations. We aim for maximum diversity of participants for maximum creativity and fun.

The theme of this year's conference is "Action and change: creative responses for new challenges". We believe that we live in rapidly changing times marked by complexity, uncertainty and anticipation. We also think that action learning and action research can be highly effective in tackling these complex and wicked problems.

Call for papers closed on 28th February, BUT...if you or a group have an idea for some creative responses to wicked problems, please send a 100 word proposal to Admin.alara@alara.net.au ASAP!! We would still love to hear from you.

If you don't want to present a workshop or a paper, but do want to come to join a supportive community, please note the conference dates in your diary. Registration for the conference will begin in May and early bird registration closes on 18 July 2011. Visit the website: www.alara.net.au. Become a member. Join the conversation.

Brisbane in September is beautiful and so is our conference centre, Riverglenn, at Indooroopilly. Come and join us!



Research Fellow in Participatory Action Research!

Queensland University of Technology is pleased to announce Linda Shallcross has been appointed as Research Fellow in Participatory Action Research. Linda will take up the position from May 16th and be located with the Social Work and Human Services program in the Faculty of Health. Linda will be working with Phil Crane on a range of research projects that are utilising PAR, including ones developing youth drug and alcohol practice resources for Queensland, and engaging outdoor workers in evaluating sunsafe practices. Linda is presenting at the ALARA conference later this year. When asked what her approach to PAR is Linda wrote:

My enthusiasm for PAR as a method for challenging the system is demonstrated in my recent work with the "Black Sheep" advocacy group for workers who had been forced out of their employment through a process they identified as mobbing, a form of social isolation akin to covert bullying. The outcomes attained surpassed the participants' own expectations with several obtaining financial settlements, drawing media attention to the issues,

and changed public service policies and practices in some instances. These outcomes were achieved through the exercise of individual agency facilitated by the exchange of knowledge and experience within a support network. I have also become involved in PAR in Aboriginal communities and this has resulted in programs for women on Palm Island as well as further south in the Ballarat region to identify the learning needs that would be useful to them and their communities. In conjunction with local TAFE Colleges, this led to the development of Counseling Skills courses for Aboriginal women.

The exemplarian model of participatory action research requires the achievement of positive outcomes to reduce the adverse consequences for those people impacted upon by the problem. This model is where all the participants are experiencing the problem and where they identify strategies to achieve positive change. This requires a certain amount of courage on their part, to first, acknowledge the reality of their situation, and second, to recognise that they can exercise their agency. The role of support networks and role models in providing the necessary support during this time is essential.

Thanks... We understand Linda found out about the position through ALARA!!

Phil Crane
QUT



ALARA Draft Strategic Plan

The Management Committee has produced a new Strategic Plan for 2011 – 2014. We invite all members to review and comment on the Plan, which is available at <http://www.alara.net.au/node/2673>, by 10 June 2011.



An Update on the Monograph Series from Eileen Piggot-Irvine

It is with great pleasure that I invite you to read Monograph #1 for ALARA on our website (link to be emailed to you soon!).

This article by Judith Kearney and Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt is focused on transforming leadership practice within the Samoan community of Queensland. The project is reported upon in a way that provides a clear outline of both process and outcomes.

We have detailed information about the monograph series on the website, but briefly - a monograph is a long journal article. This is exciting because it gives

those of us with complex, detailed, work an opportunity to publish about this kind of work without the excessive tightening that is often needed for a journal article. The monograph option may be particularly attractive for students wanting to publish from a thesis, or more generally for anyone who wishes to write a longer article for publication.

We have a dedicated review panel for the monographs that includes myself, Shankar Sankaran, Geoff Mills, Danny Burns, Mary Brydon-Miller, Janinka Greenwood, Pip Bruce Ferguson, Pieter du Toit, Madhu Kumar and Stephanie Chee. We would love to grow the number of people on the panel, so please don't hesitate to volunteer.



Melbourne ALAR Network news from Bill Genat

AR@Cafeltalia: Melbourne Monthly AR Discussion Group

Meetings of a disparate collection of Action Research, Action Learning aficionados have been held monthly in Melbourne over the past 18 months prompted by a yearning expressed from a number of locals at the September 2009 ALARA National Conference in Melbourne to fly in the face of online anything and meet face-to-face to discuss practice dilemmas and associated theoretical conundra. The gestation of the initial idea was accompanied by the arising of desire to accompany exploration of such dilemmas and conundra with a suitable range of taste sensations but in a relatively quiet space amid the hubbub of Melbourne's rampaging and often rumbumptious eating places. AR@ZiaTeresa emerged in Lygon St East Brunswick as a suitably challenging, convivial and good-hearted monthly get-together of AR & AL practitioners, thinkers, students, explorers and risk-takers. Over a range of mouth-watering Italian inspired delights, regularly half a dozen or more fellow travellers share tales from the field, current challenges, spine-tingling successes and suspenseful walks on the wild side. Recently, we have changed venues to a space where we have a room to ourselves on a Wednesday evening. We welcome anyone along to share the journey.

Café Italia

56/66 University Street (off Lygon b/w Grattan & Faraday)

Carlton

Please RSVP: Jill.Sanguinetti@vu.edu.au;

bgenat@unimelb.edu.au

Bon appetite!



Assistance Please

In our October 2010 issue of the Newsletter, I asked interested people to assist in the running of ALARA. We sought a bookkeeper and a volunteer to become the Publications Co-ordinator.

The good news is that Donna Alleman has decided to continue to provide bookkeeping services, now that Robyn Lynn has taken over the Administration duties.

We did not get anyone stepping forward for the Publications Co-ordinator role. Regretfully, we also have had to accept Jeannette Kavanagh's resignation, due to increasing commitments in similar roles. We will miss Jeannette's contribution and thank her for her time on the Management Committee.

I therefore am asking two (or three or more) members to step up and assist the Management Committee. Both roles require a commitment of about five (5) (V) hours a month.

ALARA Publications Group Co-ordinator

The Publications Group Co-ordinator is a member of the Working Group of the Management Committee (MC) of ALARA. The position oversees ALARA's publications, which are the ALAR Journal, this Newsletter, and a Monograph series. Each of these publications has their own editor(s). The Co-ordinator co-ordinates and supports those editors, and liaises with other members of the MC. This work may include assisting with sourcing articles for publication, developing procedures and policies to improve processes and assist with succession planning, and co-ordinating communication between the editors. An important area of development is the move to electronic versions of the Newsletter and the Journal, and the connection to the website.

ALARA Membership and Marketing Co-ordinator

ALARA has a Membership and Marketing Plan (which Vicki Vaartjes, the former M & M Co-ordinator and I are reviewing), and the Management Committee (MC) wants to identify new ways to attract and retain members. M & M Co-ordinator will work with the MC in developing and implementing these strategies. Obviously, increasing ALARA's membership is important to the ongoing viability of ALARA, and the M & M Co-ordinator will receive assistance from the MC members and Donna and Robyn.

If you would like to discuss either of these roles before committing yourself, please contact me on 0421 478 670, or via email president@alara.net.au.

Colin Bradley
President

Action Research Goes Greek!

We have the pleasure to inform you that we have created the first Greek website on educational action research and it is already on line, available on: www.actionresearch.gr

Grasping this opportunity, we also released an e-journal titled Action

Researcher in Education on the same website. This journal will release 2 issues per year and publish:

- Papers referring on educational action research theory and more generally on teacher's reflective professional development;

- Educational action researches, with the aim of making their outcomes widely known and available

The 1st issue of the journal has already been released and includes papers in English and in Greek. Please, have a look at it and also forward the address of the website (www.actionresearch.gr <http://www.actionresearch.gr>) to whom it may concern.

Try to spread the news to researchers, students, educators, university teachers that could be interested to contribute to the dialogue between action researchers we want to establish and maintain through this e-journal. Also, do not hesitate to submit a paper (you can find details on the site).

Yours sincerely

The Editors of the e-journal

Eleni Katsarou, Assistant Professor – University of Crete, Greece

Vassilis Tsafos, Lecturer – University of Athens, Greece



Journal News

The first **Special Edition** of the Journal for 2011 is on its way to the printers. We received eleven first draft papers from the UK, Canada, America and Australia and selected 5 after review and re-submission. The theme of Future Praxis develops Day 4 of the World Congress, enabling a close reflection on how practitioners theorise their practices with a particular focus on the future. The variety of approaches is truly rich, and the diversity of future focus also makes for an inspiring edition. ALARA thanks all contributors and reviewers for their significant contribution to the field.

The **electronic journal** is beginning its first stage of development, with the support of a sub group to help it on its way. The second journal for 2011 will be the first electronic journal edition. ALARA will continue to offer hard copy journals for those who want them. Electronic journals significantly increase our writers' exposure to the world, and also enables publication of more media-rich contributions with the inclusion of you-tube, links and other new modes of writing.

Participatory strategies in focus: Kildonan Uniting Care

Well have I got the best job in the universe, coordinator of the 'Peer Support Program'.

This program was designed by Kildonan Uniting Care and funded by the Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation and the Victorian Bushfire Appeal fund.

Communities know what they need to heal and the best people to do the healing are the communities themselves, together. This program allows for that to happen in many ways. It's about supporting and training community members in areas of basic mental health, First Aid, suicide intervention, trauma, PTSD as well as the knowledge and contacts of every service, department and resource available in the area to assist other community members in their recovery. The Peer Support Program strengthens the community by building strong social networks, with people working together and sharing information, knowledge and support. It allows communities to identify highest priority issues and have an active role in implementing what needs to be done.

We have 15 community members currently in training; they are supported and mentored by five professional health care workers and myself. I am in the process of interviewing another 15 community members and another 5 health care professional. I have found it to be extremely easy to recruit volunteers. No one likes to see people suffering; people want to be able to constructively help and support each other. The enthusiasm, empathy and passion to assist others who are struggling within our community are inspiring.

Information on community issues and how the program is going is collected on a routine basis. This is reflected on by myself and the volunteers at regular intervals and is used to direct and fine tune the program. For example, key information is received directly by community member volunteers and every interaction the community volunteers have with other community members is documented. At the end of each month this is collected and evaluated, quickly identifying issues within our community. I send this data through to the appropriate departments or organizations to act on, as appropriate.

This information also gives us the evidence base from which we advocate for additional support and resources. For example, we have identified through feed back that people will comfortably talk to a fellow known community member about their situation before engaging with other external assistance. We have also found that a high percentage of people after Black Saturday have not reached out for assistance or had minimal assistance for a number of reasons, as illustrated in these quotes:

'Others are a lot worse of than me'; 'I have never had to ask for a hand out, I'm so embarrassed'; 'I didn't lose my house'; and 'We thought we could do it ourselves'. The peer support volunteers are able to share what assistance is available to them and encourage and support them to access what is needed. Having this type of support on the ground, will help to alleviate long term suffering and prevent exacerbation of personal issues through providing support earlier and in a culturally sensitive manner.

I believe this program should be implemented on the ground within months after future natural disasters. It helps to prevent fragmentation of communities, establishes strong communication channels and referral pathways, helps identify prominent issues and it builds networks and strong support s within and by communities.

Jodie Thorneycroft.



We always welcome news of your projects, studies and publications. Send articles for the ALARA Newsletter to editor@alara.net.au



World Congress Publication

An Editorial Panel has assembled with the participation of the Congress Keynote Speakers and Theme Chairs to produce a publication of the World Congress papers. Confirmed panel members are: Budd Hall, Alan Rayner, Patta Scott-Villiers, Karen Adams, Bronwyn Fredericks, John Molineaux, Rob Nabben Claudia Gillberg, Janet McIntyre, Shankar Sankaran June Lennie, Phil Crane and Susan Goff. ALARA thanks everyone on the panel for so generously contributing their time and expertise. A Call has been sent to authors to submit their works by end of May. Of the 145 possible contributions we will be publishing about 20: the Editorial Panel will be invited to co-determine the selection criteria. We hope to launch the publication at the Australian conference this year.



ALARA's contact details are:

PO Box 1748

Toowong

Queensland

4066, Australia

Phone: +61 7 40582268

Email: secretary@alara.net.au

ALARA Management Committee 2010-2011

| Name | Position | Contact No | Email |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ALARA Inc | | PO Box 1748 TOOWONG QLD 4077 AUSTRALIA | www.alara.net.au |
| Donna Alleman | Administration Coordinator | +61 (0)7 3342 1668 +61 (0) 412 153 548 | finance@alara.net.au |
| Robyn Lynn | Minute Secretary | +61 (0)7 4058 2268 | secretary@alara.net.au |
| Colin Bradley | President | +61 (0) 421 478 670 | president@alara.net.au |
| Pamela Kruse | Constitutional Secretary | +61 (0)7 3354 2878 (H) +61 (0)7 3234 0349 (W) +61 (0) 402 195 090 | pamela_kruse@health.qld.gov.au |
| John Molineux | Treasurer | +61 (0) 417 483 332 | treasurer@alara.net.au |
| Susan Goff | Publications Group C | +61 (0) 8012 8969 | editor@alara.net.au |
| Vacant | Membership and Marketing Coordinator | | |
| Jose Ramos | International Vice President | | jose@actionforesight.net |
| Ross Colliver | Web Services Coordinator | +61 (0) 411 226 519 +61 (0)3 9078 1108 | ross.colliver@bigpond.com |
| Claudia Gillberg | Streams Co-ordinator | +46 (0) 470 70 80 15 (W) +46 (0) 733 44 11 69 (Mob) | claudia.gillberg@lnu.se |
| Vicki Vaartjes | National Vice President | +61 (0) 413 047 852 (Australian mobile on roaming – so OK to use) +667 22187 (home) +667 23042 (work) +667 7496536 (m) | vicki@leadingtolearn.com.au |

| | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Outgoing | | | |
| Susan Goff | Immediate Past President | +61 (0)2 8012 8969 (W) +61 (0)2 9555 7184 (H) +61 (0) 409 139 634 | susan.g@cultureshift.com.au |
| Margaret O'Connell | Publications Co-ordinator | +61 (0)2 6247 8351 (H) +61 (0) 402 672 889 | margoconnell@gmail.com |
| Jacques Boulet | Immediate International President Past Vice | +61 (0) 3 9819 3239 | jacques@borderlands.org.au |

Final