



# 澳大利亞學漢語協會

Association for Learning Mandarin in Australia Inc.

## ASSOCIATION FOR LEARNING MANDARIN IN AUSTRALIA (ALMA) ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### Committee Report 2015-2016

The Association of Learning Mandarin in Australia is a non-profit organisation that was established in 1984. The Association's fundamental objectives according to the constitution are threefold:

- To further excellent learning and teaching of Chinese in Australia.
- To promote awareness and understanding of Chinese culture and heritage in Australian society.
- To set up and operate Chinese speaking educational and child-care facilities.

This is the report of ALMA committee activities for the financial year 2015-2016. Significant activities since October 2015 to November 2016 are also included. The constitution of the Association for Learning Mandarin in Australia requires that the President deliver this report to the Annual General Meeting.

The committee has met on 10 occasions, with 3 sub-committee meetings also being held since October 2015. Although the Association is a not-for-profit organisation, it raises funds through financial memberships to ALMA. Additionally, finances are raised through the Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre (CAECC) in the form of childcare fees. (For further details please see the ALMA Treasurers report) The number of memberships of the Association as of 2 November 2016 was 57 family memberships, 10 individual memberships and 2 were association memberships. The Centre has been operating at near full capacity over the last 12 months, and has a healthy waiting list for future enrolments. An increasing number of parents value the teaching and learning of Chinese as a second language.

During this financial year, there have been several highlights that are mentioned in chronological order below.

In early November Anna Buckley, Mandy Scott and Jaan Murphy were invited to visit Canberra Grammar School's *Snow Centre for Education in the Asian Century*. Justin Hassell was the host of a valuable meeting that led to the venue hosting a forum for Chinese educators in November 2015. This was kindly attended by Jaan Murphy.

Towards the end of November 2015, CAECC held its end of year concert in Mawson Primary School. This concert is the climax of the year. This is when the toddlers and preschools excite their parents, staff and guests with their Chinese language skills, through singing, dancing and storytelling. The staff and students, as always exceeded expectations by their spectacular performances and agile language skills. ALMA was graced with the presence of Indigenous elder Robin Dass from the ANU Tjabal Indigenous Higher Education Centre, where she acknowledged the country and praised the centre for its excellence in bilingual education and community outreach. Professor Ning Weiwei, a prominent educational psychologist from the Southwest Jiaotong University in China, also attended. He thoroughly enjoyed the children's performances.

and tour of the early childhood centre. He was particularly impressed by the children's confidence, precise pronunciation and tender ages of the children.

In early December, a bilingual semi-structured questionnaire was formulated and administered to all the staff at CAECC, to elucidate their perspectives on teaching and learning Mandarin. ALMA is grateful for all staff insights, experiences and ideas. Based on recommendations of the CAECC staff, ALMA invested in educational technology in the form of a smartboard, iPads and desk top computers. As a further follow-up, two bilingual staff training events were conducted in January. These meetings further elucidated creative ideas and best practice initiatives that were deemed by staff to further enhance the Mandarin curriculum at the centre. Two meetings were hosted by Anna Buckley and Mandy Scott. Both meetings were successful and inspired fruitful and innovative discussions around multilingualism, innovative cross-cultural pedagogical practice etc.

In February, Anna Buckley and Mandy Scott started discussions with various stakeholders at ANU in order to kick start a collaborative student Ambassador project. This is one of ALMA's three projects funded under the ACT Government Mandarin Culture and Language Grants Program. In this project, ALMA has teamed up with ANU Australian Centre on China in the World [CIW] and the Postgraduate and Research Students' Association [PARSA]. The project aims to link ANU students and researchers with ACT schools to enrich school programs and encourage students to further develop their interest in China and pursue Chinese Studies. ANU mentors have so far gone to two schools. The project is ongoing.

To promote awareness and understanding of the value of learning Chinese language and culture in Australia. Anna Buckley and Brendan Forde at the end of March 2016 hosted a by invitation only event '*The Importance of Learning Mandarin in Australia*'. This was in collaboration with the Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs and held in the Ross Hohnen Room of the ANU Chancery. Three of Australia's distinguished scholars were invited to present. Member for Canberra Gai Brodtmann opened the occasion with an outstanding oration. The impactful event triumphed as the speakers captivated the audience, with their depth of analysis, knowledge and humour. This event was one of the highlights of year as it brought together the principals from primary and secondary schools, academia and executives from various government departments and the private sector. ALMA would also like to thank the Coral Bell School of Asia and Pacific Affairs for kindly providing funding for the event.

In April, Amelia Tandy published the ALMA newsletter. Thank you Amelia for writing such an engaging and informative newsletter.

In May 2016, Anna Buckley and Mandy Scott assisted in organising an event with ANU China in the World where over 60 Year 10 students from Radford College attended. ALMA would like to thank Brendan Forde for his outstanding talk on *Australia China Relations*, Mrs Gregory from ANU College whose talk on, *Recruiting Chinese Students in the Year of the Red Monkey: An Economics Perspective* enthralled the young audience. A doctoral candidate Qin Yang also eloquently presented on *Architectural and Symbolic aspects of the China in the World building*. This was followed by a guided tour of the CIW building itself, which was a fascinating delight for all involved. The final talk of the day was by Ian Hall from *Visit Canberra* who spoke about *The marketing involved in achieving Singapore Airlines agreement to start international flights to Canberra*. This event was highly successful, potentially inspiring a number of students to continue studying Chinese and other Asian languages at tertiary level.

In May 2016, ALMA also commenced its funded project with Mawson Primary School. This has involved weekly classes twice a week to teach Mawson Primary and CAECC parents. Yan li from CAECC, Constance,

Wenyuan, Liling, and Chad from Mawson Primary have taken the time to prepare and teach these outstanding classes. The Chinese classes have provided parents with an introduction to the language as well as resources and online materials they can continue to use to develop their own skills in Mandarin along with those of their children. These classes have assisted in fostering valuable connections and friendships between parents, teachers and students at both institutions. Relevantly, this has increased the number of individuals currently learning Chinese in Canberra.

Judy Kuzma Director of CEACC resigned from her role in June after 12 years in service to pursue a range of exciting adventures. ALMA wished Judy the very best and thanked her for being one of Canberra's greatest early childhood educators. She was adored by many of our children and parents over the years and her love and spirit will remain with us for a long time to come.

I was happy to work alongside Jaan Murphy coordinating an advertisement and recruitment strategy for the new Directors role. ALMA's wholehearted gratitude also goes to Sophie Li. Sophie at exceptionally short notice translated various job descriptions and advertisements from English to Chinese. Sophie's translations skills were flawless, timely and professional. Thank you Sophie.

In June 2016, a second bilingual questionnaire was administered to all staff at the Chinese Australia Childhood Centre. This was to gain a deeper understanding into staff's ideas on a possible Mandarin immersion program, experience and enhanced methods for teaching Chinese. I was also honoured along with Milli Wong to take the time to translate many of the questionnaires from Chinese to English. One of the outcomes of the questionnaire was the necessity to learn and teach Chinese characters, poetry and song. The children can now be seen reading and writing simple Chinese characters, reciting classical poetry and singing a variety of classical and contemporary Chinese songs.

In July 2016, and in the absence of the CAECC Director and Assistant Director, Acting Assistant Director Pei Wang and myself had the pleasure to attend the Early Childhood Directors forum which was hosted by the Minister for Education Shane Rattenbury. The forum was held in the form of a world café where discussions on first phase of the early childhood education were encouraged. This was a splendid opportunity to appreciate firsthand the dilemmas, challenges and joys faced by the sector from both a policy and Directors perspective.

ALMA and CAECC also hosted a Fund raising event on Election day 2<sup>nd</sup> July. This was to raise money for much needed Mandarin teaching and learning materials for the centre. Thank you to Mawson Primary and all the CEACC parents that donated Bric a Brac to the centre. Sincere gratitude go to Piu, Kathleen, Pei, Anna Buckley and Mandy Scott for setting up and periodically managing the stall from early morning until after lunch. Thank you also to Sangetta, Zilla, Yanli and Garima for kindly volunteering to paint the faces of many of the little ones that passed by on election day. Although a humble event this nonetheless contributed to the jubilant community atmosphere.

In September 2016, Baoqin was employed by ALMA to Direct CAECC. Baoqin was one of many candidates shortlisted for the role. Baoqin is a one in a million Australian qualified Mandarin speaking Early Childhood Educator. Baoqin has a sincere passion for education and leadership, Chinese teaching, management and human resources. Thank you Kristyn Worner, Anna Buckley, Melita Pendegast and Laura Cai for spending days shifting through applications, writing interview questions and spending 2 full days on the recruitment panel. An extra special thanks goes to Kristyn Worner for the extra hours of behind the scenes work that were required for an extended, professional and thorough recruitment process.

Shortly after Baoqin's employment, Jing Cheng was also employed as Assistant Director while Laura Cai requested a yearlong leave of absence to go to China. Thank you Jing for graciously accepting this role. Special thanks also must go to Amelia Tandy, Mandy Scott, and Baoqin for being on the Assistant Directors recruitment panel. Your time and effort is sincerely appreciated.

Mandy Scott continues on behalf of ALMA to assist the 'Mandarin for Fun' group with the planning and presentation of this program on community radio 2XX every Friday from 7pm -7.30pm. This program promotes the use and learning of Mandarin in the ACT and informs the community, especially the Chinese speaking community, about local events and other information of interest. Children can also enjoy a bedtime stories read in Mandarin.

Mandy Scott also continues to run the Mandarin Community Tutoring project bringing together fluent speakers of Mandarin and other members of the ACT community who wish to improve their knowledge of Mandarin and/or understanding of Chinese culture. The Mandarin speakers volunteer an hour or so a week to help others learn Chinese. In return they can practice their English skills, make local friends, and learn more about language teaching and learning. In 2016, there were 24 learners and 20 tutors involved with this project, with a number of them being students at ANU.

In September, staff from the center hosted a stall at the Canberra Moon Festival, organized by the Federation of the Chinese Associations of ACT and a number of local Chinese societies. Thank you to Jing, Kathleen and Piu for managing the stall the whole day. Sincere thanks go to Baoqin, Yanli, Pei for coaching CAECC children to sing, 'Jing Ye Se', 'Yong e' and 'Molihua' and spending their time on a Saturday with us. The children gleefully performed in front of a large crowd of people. The event was thoroughly entertaining and a magnificent way to promote friendships and cross cultural understanding.

Baoqin, myself and Mandy Scott were also invited to attend China Day at Mawson Primary. This was a marvellous celebration where the primary children from all grades received awards for outstanding achievements in Chinese. Anna and Mandy also attended the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum, Multicultural Leaders Reception which was a great pleasure.

A hearty thank you also goes to Jaan Murphy for his consistent and diligent legal and professional advice throughout this year. Jaan has worked more than tirelessly, updating ALMA/ CAECC policies, negotiating and advising with the centre directors and staff. His impeccable work ethic has been remarkable and a pleasure to watch.

A very special thank you also goes to the Treasurers Tracey Roberts and Krisytn Worner, who joined the committee in April 2016. Since joining the committee, Tracey and Krisytn have also volunteered considerable time and energy in ensuring the integrity of the finances of the Association and the Centre. Their work in finances and human resource management has been dynamic. A special thank you also goes to Tracey for liaison and advisory role to the new CAECC Director. The level of dedication you have put into this task over the last two months is greatly appreciated.

No organisation can function well without a great Secretary. And to steal Amanda Andrews analogy, "Mawson Primary is the best school in the Universe", "Amelia Tandy is the best Secretary in the Universe". She raises the bar of us all. Thank you Amelia for also spending time, thought and action on ALMA's daily activities. This integral and great exertion often goes on long after hours and is sincerely valued.

I would also like to express a heartfelt thank you to all of ALMA's voluntary committee members. ALMA and CAECC could not exist without your hard work, commitment and passions. Thank you to everyone this year who has provided helpful advice, encouraging support and enthusiasm to the committee and me

personally. As Mark Twain expressed *“What you want on a raft, is for everybody to...feel right and kind towards the others”*. It has been an absolute pleasure working with you all.

On behalf of the committee, I would also like to thank our Director, Baoqin, Assistant Director, Jing, and all the Centre staff for their dedication to the centres children. I would also like to acknowledge the work of our administration staff, Kathleen and Piu, who always go above and beyond their administrative duties to help the centre run as smoothly as possible. I am sure all of us at some point have had a taste of their delicious cuisine.

On a personal note, after 5 years at the centre my youngest son will be moving onto Mawson Primary. This comes with a mixture of excitement and natural feelings of sorrow as the centre and all of its staff have become like my second family away from home. ALMA and CAECC will always hold a special place in my heart as my family has experienced firsthand the cross-cultural dedication, tenderness and care that ALMA/CAECC offers. After 3 years as a volunteer on the ALMA committee, I was chirpily up past midnight observing the nominations come through for 2016-2017 ALMA committee. I am thrilled by the diversity and calibre of nominations and believe ALMA will be in balanced hands. Thus, I can finally take a long and deep breath and with a tranquil heart take a back seat, so I can hastily focus on writing up the last few chapters of my doctoral thesis.

It is thus with great honour and hope for ALMA and CAECC, I end the meeting with couple of quotes. The first from Nelson Mandela,

*“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language that goes to his heart.”*

And as Gerta says,

*“ You learn another language and you gain another soul”*

I hereby submit this report to the meeting.

Anna Buckley  
Outgoing President  
ALMA Committee  
9 November 2016.