

ASSOCIATION FOR LEARNING MANDARIN IN AUSTRALIA
ANNUAL REPORT 2012-13
COMMITTEE REPORT

The constitution of the Association for Learning Mandarin in Australia requires that the president present to the Association's annual general meeting the report of the committee on the activities of the Association. This report covers the period 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013. Significant developments since 30 June 2013 are also reported.

The Committee has met on 10 occasions since the 2012 AGM. Attendance at committee meetings was as follows:

Committee Member	Position	Number of meetings attended
Ian Maclean	President to December 2012	1
Janaline Oh	Vice-President then President from December 2012	10
Mandy Scott	Secretary	10
Haiwei Fan	Treasurer to August 2013	1
Yu Xie	Treasurer from August 2013	2
Alison Keys	Committee member	5
Bridget O'Connor	Committee member	5
Carol Jones	Committee member	3
Richard Singer	Committee member	4
Len Waugh	Committee member	5

Ian Maclean, who was elected President of ALMA at our last AGM, stepped down in December 2012 for family reasons, as a result of which the Vice President became President for the rest of the year.

Mandy Scott is the Public Officer of the Association.

Alison Keys represents the Association at the Mawson Primary School Parents and Citizens Association, and Carol Jones is editor of the Association's ALMA News and ALMA Updates.

Five meetings were held at the Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre, and five were held at other locations. These latter meetings considered matters unrelated to the centre.

The number of financial memberships of the Association as at 28 October 2013 was 80. Of these, 47 were family memberships, 31 were individual memberships and 2 were corporate/association memberships.

Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre

The most financially significant activity of the Association is the operation of the Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre in a building in the grounds of Mawson Primary School in the southern suburbs of Canberra. The Centre is licensed to accommodate 46 children. Demand for places at the Centre is very high and on most days, the Centre is completely full.

During the year, the Centre received a visit from Senator Kate Lundy, then Federal Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Senator Lundy was impressed with the amount of

Mandarin spoken to and by the preschool room children, and strongly supported our efforts to give the children a good grounding in both English and Mandarin.

Another highlight of the year was the End of Year concert. The children thrilled their families and friends with their enthusiasm in singing, dancing and reciting Chinese nursery rhymes and songs. Mme Bai, then Counsellor at the Chinese Embassy and wife of the then Ambassador, HE MR Chen Yuming, also attended and was delighted to hear Australian children singing songs and reciting rhymes that she recalled from her own childhood. The Committee is confident that all parents will join in expressing our heartfelt thanks to the staff for all of the effort that goes into the production of these concerts.

In May 2013, United Voice, the trade union representing early childhood educators, succeeded in obtaining Federal government funding for a \$3 per hour wage bonus for educators in eligible centres. Eligibility involved having an enterprise agreement approved by Fair Work Australia, and direct application to the then Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The centre was successful in achieving approval for this increase for its staff in July 2013. The new federal government has cast some doubt on the implementation of this commitment, and so we await the outcome of its deliberations.

The Association had suggested to Mawson Primary School for several years that the Mandarin Immersion Program be made available to children from kindergarten through to Year 6, not, as for many years, from Year 3 to Year 6. The Committee is pleased that the school decided to extend the program to Kindergarten in 2012, and has continued with that cohort in Year 1, as well as introducing a Kindergarten Mandarin Immersion Program of one day a week for 2013. We encourage the school to continue its efforts to improve the proficiency of its students through the program.

The Centre's licence to operate from a Mawson Primary school building is due to expire in early 2014. The Directorate of Education and Training is currently undertaking a legal review of all of its lease arrangements with child care centres, and will place all expiring licences with a month-to-month arrangement until that has been completed. Meanwhile, the Committee and Director are working with the Directorate to explore the possibilities for an extension to our facility to enable us to have separate rooms for the babies and toddlers. This would involve an additional building and thus a requirement for additional land (currently unused) and services, but would enable us to improve substantially the quality of our programs for the under-3 age groups.

The Committee is pleased once again to record its appreciation for the sterling efforts of the Director, Judy Kuzma, and her team at the Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre. We would also like to acknowledge Laura Cai, who acted for Judy during her well-deserved long service leave, and Amy Brady, who took on significant additional duties during that time as well.

Forum on Mandarin Learning in the ACT

In August 2013, the Association, in close collaboration with the Australian National University and the ACT Directorate of Education and Training, hosted a Forum on Mandarin Learning in the ACT. The Forum was opened by Andrew Leigh MP, Member for Fraser. Around 60 academics, primary, secondary and community school teachers, as well as a number of our own educators, attended to discuss how to increase the number of students learning Mandarin and how to improve their proficiency on graduation from school. Among the ideas floated for follow-up were proposals for better use of technology to enable teachers to use resources developed by others, better communication between teachers in mainstream schools and those in

community language schools, and ways to encourage students to see Mandarin as a rewarding learning experience.

A small working group established to take forward Forum outcomes met in late August, and will continue this work. The Association strongly encourages parents who are interested in having their children learn Mandarin to get involved in these activities, as parental interest is ultimately what will drive change in the schools.

Community Tutoring Project

This project brings together fluent speakers of Mandarin in the ACT and other members of the Canberra 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 practise their English skills, make local friends, and learn more about language teaching and learning. Learners and tutors usually meet on a one-on-one basis at a time and place suitable to both sides. The project has been running for 13 years, 12 of these under the auspices of ALMA. It is coordinated by ALMA's secretary, Dr Mandy Scott.

In 2013, 29 Mandarin learners and 27 tutors registered for the project. With the assistance of Mimi Zhang and Zhang Yanyin, two experienced teachers of Mandarin, ALMA organised an introductory session for both tutors and learners on 16 March and a training workshop for tutors on 25 August. Both these sessions were held at the ANU, and ALMA thanks the university for providing the venue free of charge.

Broader Language Education Advocacy

ALMA continued throughout the year to engage in advocacy for improved language policies at both the Federal and Territory level. Senator Lundy's visit to the Centre was an outcome of these efforts. ALMA also met with the office of Shane Rattenbury MLA to encourage Green interest in these issues, and wrote to the then Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition (now Prime Minister and Foreign Minister).

During the year, the editorship of the Association's publications, ALMA News and ALMA Updates, was taken over by Carol Jones. I would like to express the Association's appreciation of the energy and enthusiasm she has brought to that task.

Also during the year, our indefatigable secretary, Mandy Scott, continued to maintain the Association's website: <http://learningmandarin.weebly.com/>.

Finally, the Committee would like to express its appreciation for the great work done by our committee members Alison Keys and Richard Singer, who are not standing for re-election this year. I will also not be standing for re-election as I will be going overseas on a government posting in January 2014.

I commend the report to the meeting.

Janaline Oh

For the ALMA Committee
30 October 2013