



# Association for Learning Mandarin in Australia Inc 澳大利亞學漢語協會



## Annual General Meeting of the Association of Learning Mandarin in Australia Inc.

### *President's Report 2019-2020*

#### **Outline of ALMA's objectives**

The Association of Learning Mandarin in Australia Inc. (ALMA) is a non-profit organisation that was established in 1984. ALMA's fundamental objectives (set out in its constitution) are:

- To further the use and learning of the Chinese language in Australia.
- To set up and operate bilingual Chinese and English educational and child-care facilities.
- To promote awareness and understanding of Chinese culture and heritage in Australian society.

ALMA is a not for profit organisation, and raises funds through financial memberships to ALMA as well as through the Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre (CAECC), which it owns and operates.

#### **Summary of CAECC related activities**

The 2019 - 2020 year has been both a challenging and rewarding year for the ALMA Committee. The Committee spent a considerable portion of its time:

- Understanding the government funding and direct implications of these during the global covid-19 pandemic. Federal government froze family contributions to childcare and supplemented this with jobkeeper payments and various one off grants.
- Recruitment of the Infant/Toddler room leader position
- Supporting recruitment of an educator for the pre school room
- Supporting CAECC Director in updating the policies at the centre.
- Upgrading the IT system at CAECC

#### **ALMA Committee Changes**

Two changes occurred during the year. In February, President Daniel Sheridan stepped down from his duties, Kate Friend (Vice President) was nominated as president and Dr Amanda Scott (General Committee Member) was nominated as Vice President.

Treasurer Syndy Marr stepped down from her duties in June, and provided a solid basis for the following year's budget before ceasing her duties. Victor Yee (parent at the CAECC) volunteered and has been acting treasurer since July.

#### **CAECC Staffing**

We've had some changes to staffing this year, Zilla Tam is our Assistant Director, previously room leader of the Infants Toddler room. We've recruited Sunny as our Room Leader in the Infant Toddlers room. Sunny is a Mandarin speaker and has ECT qualifications, strengthening the educational focus of the centre.

Yangli resigned, and we have recruited Jun as a full time educator in the pre school room. Jun is also a Mandarin speaker with strong early childhood education experience.

Annette has placed a strong focus on educational programming and reflection on our practises in the centre. With this renewed focused and the expectation that many staff will want to and/or need to take leave once international borders reopen, we expect to hire a full time support educator in 2021.

The team has had an extremely stressful year, from external factors. February was the only month the ACT was NOT in a state of emergency. Bushfires in surrounding NSW causing the state of emergency in December/January and the covid-19 global pandemic from March until now. Our staff have remained strong and loyal to our families and the centre during this time.

During the recent recruitment it has become evident that although we do pay above award wages, we are not competitive in the Canberra marketplace. Annette has also established that most of the current contracts are out of date and inconsistent. We would strongly recommend the incoming committee to negotiate an enterprise bargaining agreement with the staff. Staff are aware and are in agreement with this proposal.

### **Non-CAECC activities**

Outside of the CAECC, some of our usual ALMA activities were cancelled or modified due to covid-19 and social distancing restrictions. However the following did occur:

- CAECC pre-schoolers performed at the multicultural festival in February. This was a wonderful opportunity to increase awareness of our work within the community and for our pre school children to perform Mandarin songs and dance.
- the presentation of a bilingual program on community radio station 2XX every Friday from 7pm -7.30pm that 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 story in Mandarin
- the Mandarin Community Tutoring project, which brings 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 (at no cost)
- production and distribution of quarterly ALMA Newsletter

### **What's in store for 2020-2021?**

I hope to remain on the ALMA Committee and have nominated myself for president. Many activities outside of CAECC are dependent on a covid-19 vaccine and relaxation of social distancing requirements. I hope the new committee will prioritise the following:

- finalise the remaining CAECC-related policies that have yet to be approved by the Committee
- Establish and agree on an enterprise bargaining agreement with educators at CAECC
- further develop and promote the community tutoring project
- continue the 2XX weekly radio program
- continue to strengthen ties with the Chinese community and
- collaborate with Chinese community language schools regarding:
  - Mandarin programs for intermediate Mandarin-speaking students who do not have native Mandarin speakers in their immediate family and
  - After-school and school holiday programs.

### **Thank you and Committee recommendations**

It has been a unique year with a mostly new ALMA committee, we moved from monthly face to face meetings to remote fortnightly meetings in an attempt to understand the rapidly changing environment. The committee were extremely supportive to both myself, Annette and the educators during this uncertain time.

In particular I would like to thank:

- Dr Amanda Scott for running the tutoring program and helping to present the weekly radio program.

- Cherie for organising, editing and translating content for the ALMA newsletter. Her input into the recruitment for the infant/toddler room leader was also highly valued.
- Nicholas Millar for his IT support for the CAEEC upgrade.
- Syndy Marr, for her work as treasurer and her commitment to assist in developing the current ALMA budget.
- Victor Yee for volunteering for the treasurer role and his ability to understand the detail in the budget.
- Annette Chemin for her determination in improving the centre's education standards, and her consistency in updating the centre's policies.
- Zilla Tam for her ability and willingness to learn new skills and her total commitment in putting the children first.

Kate Friend

President, ALMA

19 October 2020.