



# ALMA Update

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## December 2009

### ALMA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2009

ALMA held its 2009 AGM at the Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre in Mawson on 10 October 2009.

In accordance with the ALMA constitution, the meeting received and adopted the minutes of the previous AGM, report of the ALMA committee, and audited financial statements for the 2008/09 financial year.

The following were then elected as members of the ALMA committee for 2009/2010:

- President: Ian Maclean  
Vice President: Len Waugh  
Secretary: Mandy Scott  
Treasurer: Ashley Golding  
General Committee members:  
Lauren Ryan, Emma Lovett, Michelle Lander

The report of the committee provides an interesting overview of the wide range of activities ALMA was involved in during 2008/09. A full copy will shortly be available on the 'About Us' page of the ALMA website (<http://alma.amu.edu.au>).



### ALMA CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

ALMA celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre's end-of-year concert on Friday 27 November.

Once again the children at the centre enthusiastically demonstrated their bilingual language skills and performing abilities. Families, friends and distinguished guests alike were impressed and delighted by the program. Congratulations to all the staff at the centre for organising such a great concert.

In his welcoming remarks, Ian Maclean, ALMA president, looked back on the history of the centre since its establishment in 1984. From a somewhat unorthodox beginning in Corroboree Park in Ainslie with 14 children and two staff members the centre now provides care for the children of 70 families from birth through to five years of age.

Ian then welcomed distinguished guests from the Chinese Embassy, ACT Legislative Assembly, ACT Office of Multicultural Affairs, and Mawson Primary School. These guests were invited to visit the childcare centre after the concert and hear about future plans.

Ian also thanked the childcare staff for their work over the year, and Mawson Primary School for their assistance in 2009, especially for allowing the school hall to be used for the concert.



### ACADEMIC VISITS THE CHINESE AUSTRALIAN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE

Dr Marina Houston, Lecturer in Language and Literacy Education at the University of Canberra, gave a stimulating presentation on bilingual education to staff at the Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre on Tuesday 1 December. Her practical suggestions on how best to provide a bilingual program included:

- Mandarin speaking staff members should avoid switching back and forth between Mandarin and English when speaking to children. It is better just to speak in Mandarin.
- If a Mandarin staff member is going to switch languages – it is best to tell the children explicitly, e.g. by saying "I will say it in English"
- English speaking staff can maintain the English element of the bilingual program - however they can also use common phrases spoken in Mandarin.

The Director and a parent have subsequently advised that they have observed staff putting these suggestions into practice.



### CANBERRA PANDA CHILDCARE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA (UC)

ALMA is continuing discussions with UC about establishing a new bilingual (Mandarin/English) childcare centre for up to 70 children on UC's Bruce campus.

About 50 people attended a public meeting at UC about the new centre on Saturday 24 October 2009. Publicity for the meeting led to a segment on WIN TV news and an article in the Sunday Canberra Times of 25 October 2009. We are continuing to receive expressions of interest from parents wishing to enrol their children at the new centre as a result of this coverage and subsequent marketing efforts.

ALMA has established a planning group on which parents interested in the new centre are well represented, and has submitted a business plan to UC. The planning group hopes to meet with representatives of the university in early January to discuss where we go from here.

To see a copy of the Concept Paper for the Canberra Panda Centre and the ALMA President's presentation at the 24 October public meeting, visit [http://alma.anu.edu.au/childcare\\_northside.htm](http://alma.anu.edu.au/childcare_northside.htm) or contact [canberrapanda@gmail.com](mailto:canberrapanda@gmail.com)



## ALMA COMMUNITY TUTORING PROJECT

We have had a steady trickle of new registrants in the project over the second half of 2009, with an unexpected surge in interest just prior to the tutoring training workshop we ran on 1 November. Several new volunteer tutors attended the workshop. Six Canberrans learning Mandarin also came along at the conclusion of the workshop to meet prospective tutors and arrange their first meetings.

The new tutors and students who registered at the November workshop bring the total number of participants in the project this year to over 80.

Thanks once again to Mimi Zhang and Zhang Yanyin, who help plan and run the tutor training workshops, and the China and Korea Centre at the ANU for providing the venue for the training.

For more information about the project and how to register, please visit the ALMA website at <http://alma.anu.edu.au>



## BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN MELBOURNE

The ALMA secretary, Mandy Scott, had a very interesting visit to Richmond West Primary School in inner city Melbourne at the end of November.

Most children at the school are enrolled in the school's bilingual program in which they study in English for only two and a half days a week. For the rest of the week they have all their lessons in

either Mandarin (from Prep to year 4) or Vietnamese (from Prep to Year 2).

Mandy visited two Mandarin classes and was impressed at the level of spoken and written Chinese of the Year 1 and Year 2 students. Although many are of Chinese background, few speak Mandarin at home.

Interestingly, Richmond West Primary was singled out as 'punching above its weight' in the *Weekend Australian* of 28/29 November. By Year 5, national testing shows that students at the school are outshining their peers in numeracy and English literacy. An excellent result for a school where English is a second language for the majority of students and where they only study in English for half the school week!

The school plans to extend the Mandarin bilingual program to year 5 in 2010 and year 6 the following year to attract more non-Chinese background families from out of area to enrol their children in the school.

For more information about the school see <http://richmondwestps.wordpress.com/>



## MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME

If you have any articles or announcements for the next ALMA Update, please send them to [mandy.scott@anu.edu.au](mailto:mandy.scott@anu.edu.au) by 15 January 2010.

*NB: Decisions on publication remain at the discretion of the ALMA committee*



# Season's greetings to all



Have a happy and safe holiday

新年快樂

*Xin nian kuai le!*