ASSOCIATION FOR LEARNING MANDARIN IN AUSTRALIA (ALMA)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Committee Report 2013-2014

This is the report of ALMA committee activities for the financial year 2013-2014. Significant activities since July-October 2014 are also included. This report is to be presented to the annual general meeting as required by the constitution of the association. The number of financial memberships of the Association as at 28 October 2014 was 87. Of these, 60 were family memberships, 25 were individual memberships and 2 were association memberships.

The Chinese Australian Early Childhood Centre is the ALMA committee’s largest financial responsibility and has been operating at full capacity during the last year. There are a number of important achievements in the centre this year. The first of these since last year’s AGM was the 2013 End of Year concert. This was a highlight of the year where the children thrilled their families and friends with their enthusiasm in singing, dancing and reciting Chinese songs.

Earlier this year we were successful in renewing the lease of the centre with the ACT Government Directorate of Education and Training for another 5 years, with the option to provide stable accommodation potentially for the next 11 years.

In April we met with the same Directorate to explore the possibilities of extending the centre to enable separate rooms for the babies and toddlers. This meeting was successful in getting a feasibility assessment of the building and its surroundings. The outcome of the assessment will be presented to Judy and committee representatives this week and hopefully offer some positive options for the centre.

An important piece of work by the committee this year was to develop and implement a staff salary policy. The main purpose of the policy was to outline the structure of salaries which are above the award rate and also reward staff with early childhood teaching qualifications which are not currently covered in the current award.

Yet again, this year has seen a very low turnover of staff in the centre. We appreciate the continuity and stability this provides our children and commend this achievement of the centre. On behalf of the ALMA committee, I would like to sincerely thank Judy and her staff for their hard work in providing a nurturing and stimulating environment for the care and education of our children. In addition to Judy as Director, the committee would also like to thank Laura the assistant Director, as well as the room leaders, Amy and Pei in the pre-schoolers room and Haiying and Rachel in the infants and toddlers room for their role in running the centre.

As well as operating the centre, ALMA also plays a broader role in Mandarin education advocacy. Following on from ALMA’s forum last year on Mandarin education in the ACT, the remaining portion of the China in the World grant was used to host an event called ‘Championing Chinese Studies in ACT’. The aim was to develop ANU's links with schools, the community and other relevant organisations to promote and improve Mandarin learning and teaching in the ACT region. Students of Mandarin at ANU were presented with awards of achievement. The evening was an opportunity for these students to tell their own Mandarin education story to an audience of school and community Mandarin teachers and organisations involved in Mandarin education.

The network of people working in Mandarin education across early childhood, schools and universities in the ACT has recently been consolidated into a working group with the ACT Government. This is a result of some quick thinking by ALMA’s secretary in response to the Chief Minister’s comments on wanting better Mandarin education in the ACT. The working group, chaired by the ACT Education and Training Directorate, has been tasked with preparing a blueprint for enhancing the learning of Mandarin and promoting Chinese culture in ACT schools including identifying opportunities in the Australian curriculum. I would like to thank Mandy Scott and Len Waugh for their participation in this important working group on behalf of ALMA.

An ongoing activity of ALMA is the community tutoring project run by Mandy Scott. This project joins Mandarin learners with fluent Mandarin speakers in the ACT area who volunteer to help them understand Chinese language and culture. In 2014 there were 34 learners and 25 tutors involved with this project, with a number of them being students at ANU.

ALMA continues to work with Mawson Primary school in promoting their Mandarin program. The committee supported Mawson parents in their concern about the plans for the Year 3 and 4 Mandarin program to be reduced by a day in 2014. Action from Mawson Primary Parents and Citizens Association, along with ALMA, resulted in the proposed reduction of the program being quickly withdrawn. ALMA is pleased to note that Mawson primary school were able to extend their Mandarin program into Pre-school for the first time during 2014.

During the year, there was a lot of work done by committee members. Those with specific roles that the committee would like to acknowledge and thank include Mandy Scott for her ongoing energy in the role of secretary of ALMA including keeping the website up to date, Len Waugh who as Vice-President has supported the President, Carol Jones for editing the ALMA news and for Glynnis-Anne Buckley who has recently taken over this role. We would also like to thank Paul Lander for stepping into the Treasurer’s shoes when Yu Xie resigned a couple of months ago and thanks also to Millie Wong for her work as ALMA’s liaison person with Mawson Primary school. There are a number of members, including myself, whose children will be leaving the centre this year and the committee would like to thank them for their work this year.

I commend this report to the meeting.

Bridget O’Connor

For the ALMA Committee

28 October 2014.