



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 2017-2018

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 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.

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 2017-2018 year has been both a challenging and rewarding year for the ALMA Committee. The Committee spent a considerable portion of its time:

- recruiting a full-time Assistant Director at the end of 2017
- dealing increased local competition resulting in falling enrolments and revenue including by:
 - conducting a re-structuring of CAECC staffing arrangements to ensure its long-term financial viability and
 - commencing a marketing campaign
- reviewing various CAECC-related operational policies
- continuing to use communication and reporting guidelines and procedures for CAECC staff
- supporting the CAECC Director in:
 - recruitment of staff and
 - managing the lease agreement for the CAECC premises, including ensuring the air-conditioning units in the CAECC were replaced prior to summer
- with the guidance of the CAECC Director, reviewing the targeted learning outcomes for children attending the CAECC, and subsequently making appropriate adjustments and
- clarifying CAECC-related staffing policies, developing policies where none existed and reporting lines / structure.

In many respects, some of the above was made difficult due to accurate financial information not being available to the Committee on a regular and timely basis in the first half of the 2017-18 financial year. However, thanks to the hard work of the Treasurer Kristyn Worner, the provision of accurate financial information to the Committee improved substantially in the second half of 2018.

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Administration review and engagement with staff

In addition to the above the Committee engaged external advisors in relation to:

- the restructure of the CAECC and
- possible installation of CCTV in the CAECC.

The Committee also conducted a number of fora during the year including:

- a Committee-Management staff forum
- a non-Management staff-Committee forum and
- various consultation meetings regarding the proposed restructure of the CAECC.

Feedback from the fora was considered by the Committee and in once instance, was directly implemented (in relation to the restructure). The Committee plans to hold the Committee-Management Staff and Committee-non-Management Staff fora two times in 2018-2019.

CAECC Budget

In some previous years it appears the ALMA Committee has had little or no input into the budget process other than determining any increase to the CAECC's fees – an inappropriate and almost wholesale delegation of a key governance responsibility of the Committee.

As such, under my leadership the Committee introduced a new budget process in for ALMA's 2018-19 budget.

The ALMA Treasurer Kristyn Worner, Secretary Amelia Tandy and Committee Member Aurore Chow along with the CAECC Director and Assistant Director developed a draft budget. That draft budget was then presented to the ALMA Committee who then 'interrogated' it, its underpinning assumptions, projections and so forth before making minor amendments and then approving it.

The new process – which includes ALMA Committee Members at all stages – is designed to provide more transparency regarding budget decisions, and allowed for more input from the Committee and CAECC Director, before being amended (if required) and approved by the Committee. The new budget process was a key governance reform, and one that will ensure a higher degree of Committee oversight and control in future years.

CAECC staffing

As part of the restructure, this year the CAECC said farewell to two long-standing staff members. We wish them both the very best. Whilst we were sad to see those long-serving staff members depart, overall staff turnover rates at the CAECC continue to be much lower than the industry norm.

Non-CAECC activities

Outside of the CAECC, ALMA conducted several other activities:

- worked closely with the new Principal of Mawson Primary School (MPS) – Elizabeth Courtois – on a number of matters:
 - providing MPS with input into the design of the new Mandarin Immersion Program (MIP), including statistical information regarding average numbers of CAECC-students moving to MPS each year, to assist in resource planning and
 - assisting MPS in networking with other organisations to assist MPS in advertising and recruiting Mandarin-speaking staff for the MIP.
- ran a successful book and toy stall at the MPS fete, raising some \$500 for ALMA
- commenced discussion with the Canberra Chinese School about the lack of intermediate Mandarin classes for children from Chinese-dialect speaking families and non-Chinese speaking families, with a view to supporting new programs aimed at conversational Mandarin skills for ALMA members and former CAECC-students (and especially those in the MIP at MPS, or undertaking Mandarin at another school)
- in partnership with MPS, to offer before-school Mandarin classes for parents of CAECC/ MPS students
- assisted the 'Mandarin for Fun' group with planning
- the presentation of a 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)
- supported a lunch-time conversational group at the Woden Library
- attended a number of Chinese community events and festivals, to publicise the CAECC and ALMA's other activities and
- agreed to work with the Canberra Chinese School to develop after-school and school-holiday program curriculum targeted for non-Chinese speaking children who are not beginners (i.e., children who attend the CAECC or MPS).

What's in store for 2018-2019?

Whilst I intend this to be my last AGM as ALMA President, I hope to remain on the ALMA Committee. Whilst the agenda for 2018-19 will be driven to a large extent by the new ALMA President, in 2018-2019 it is my hope that the Committee will:

- continue to use the new budget process
- work with the Director to action the remainder of the consultant's recommendations aimed at modernising the administration and financial management of the CAECC
- finalise the remaining CAECC-related policies that have yet to be approved by the Committee
- aim to increase the community tutoring project and
- 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.

Whilst this year has been challenging, with the hard work put in by the Committee as a whole we have laid foundations that will enable the Committee to move away from operational matters to more strategic ones.

Thank you, farewell and recommendation for new leadership of ALMA

After 4 years on the Committee –two of which I have served as President – I feel the (safe) time has come to step back, and begin handing over to a 'new' generation of Committee members. I want to sincerely thank all the ALMA Committee Members who worked with me as President for the past two years. It has been an honour to serve ALMA, to work with you all, to resolve our differences respectfully and appropriately and to stand united on difficult issues and questions. In particular I would like to thank:

- Kristyn Worner for her work as Assistant Treasurer and then Treasurer (in particular her work driving the new ALMA/CAECC budget process)
- Dr Mandy Scott for running the community relations sub-committee, and her continued dedication to ALMA and the CAECC (you are truly inspirational!!)
- Amelia Tandy for her many years of dedicated service to the ALMA Committee, having served as Secretary for a number of years and having been a key member of various recruitment panels, the budget sub-Committee and a key generator of consensus-building options and ideas
- Aurore Chow for her years of service to the ALMA Committee and in particular, for her service to the budget-sub Committee and
- Tracey McRoberts for her work as Treasurer in the first few months of the year
- Wilson Yeung for his service to the ALMA Committee (particularly in relation to staffing and policy matters) prior to relocating overseas
- Zhang Yuanyuan for editing the ALMA and CAECC newsletters and providing a valuable external/non-CAECC parent perspective on various matters and

- last but not least, Syndy Marr for recently joining the ALMA Committee and contributing to the CAECC-related marketing efforts.

As I am stepping down as ALMA President, ALMA members will need to elect a new President at this AGM.

Kristyn Worner – who has served on the ALMA Committee for three years, most recently as Treasurer, has been nominated as President of ALMA. Kristyn, along with out-going Secretary Amelia Tandy and Committee Member Aurore Chow, worked with the CAECC Management team to guide the CAECC through its recent re-structure.

As a qualified CPA, with substantial management experience in various industries, Kristyn is well-placed to lead the ALMA Committee in a new era that is less focused on driving operational changes and dealing with 'legacy issues' at the CAECC, but rather on the efficient operation, quality improvement and sound management of the CAECC. As such, it is my recommendation that the ALMA members elect Kristyn Worner as the new President.

Finally, I would like to thank the CAECC Director, Ms Bao Qin, for her tireless work this year, often in trying circumstances, and her laser-beam focus on raising the educational and care standards of the CAECC, and the CAECC Assistant-Director, Alyce Hawkins, for her professionalism and willingness to take on the financial administration of the CAECC in trying circumstances. Without the two of you, the ALMA Committee could not have made 2018 as successful educationally as it was.

Jaan Murphy

President, ALMA

11 December 2017.