



# 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 2016-2017*

#### **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 2016-2017 year has been both a challenging and rewarding year for the ALMA Committee. The Committee spent a considerable portion of its time:

- reviewing various CAECC-related operational policies for the first time in many years
- putting in place new communication and reporting guidelines and procedures for CAECC staff
- supporting the CAECC Director in:
  - organising the replacement of unsafe play equipment
  - recruitment of full-time staff and
  - managing the lease agreement for the CAECC premises, including ensuring the CAECC was repainted for the first time in a number of years
- 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 (for example, in relation to study assistance, evidence requirements for leave) and reporting lines / structure.

In many respects, the some of the above was made difficult due to accurate financial information not being available to the Committee on a regular and timely basis. However, steps will be taken to ensure that in 2017-2018 the Committee will have financial reports at every meeting.

#### **Administration review and engagement with staff**

In addition to the above the Committee engaged a consultant to review the administration and financial systems of the CAECC. After receiving and consider the consultant's report, to assist in understanding the implications and options arising from some of recommendations in the report the Committee sought further independent advice regarding potential reform options.

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The Committee also conducted two fora during the year:

- a Committee-Management staff forum and
- non-Management staff-Committee forum.

The feedback from these two fora were then considered by the Committee and a few quality-improvement items and objectives arising from that feedback were discussed with the Director and are being implemented. The Committee plans to hold these fora three times per year in 2017-2018.

### CAECC staffing

This year the CAECC said farewell to our long-term Assistant Director, Ms Laura Cai who decided to explore opportunities outside the childcare industry. In addition, Ms Amy Brady has recently resigned to take up a Director role at another centre. We wish them both the very best. Whilst we were sad to lose two respected and long-serving staff members, overall staff turnover rates at the CAECC continue to be much lower than the industry norm. The Committee will be working with the Director to recruit appropriate replacement staff as a matter of priority after the AGM.

### Non-CAECC activities

Outside of the CAECC, ALMA conducted several other activities. The Vice-President, Dr Mandy Scott, convened the community relations sub-committee. Under her guidance, ALMA:

- continued, in partnership with Mawson Primary School (MPS), to offer before-school Mandarin classes for parents of the CAECC and MPS
- 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)
- attended a number of Chinese community events and festivals, to publicise the CAECC and ALMA's other activities
- conducted the ANU ambassador/mentoring project in collaboration with the Australian Centre on China in the World at the ANU (CIW) to organise and administer this project, which aims to promote and enrich Chinese Studies in ACT schools by:
  - linking ACT schools with ANU students and researchers
  - the ANU 'mentors' share their enthusiasm, experience, and knowledge of Chinese language and culture to help teachers and inspire school students and
  - aim to assist the school's Chinese language programs (for example, by developing an ongoing relationship with the school)
- 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) and
- promoting ALMA's broader vision for Chinese education in the ACT by exploring ways to make Canberra a more China-literate and China-friendly city in order to:
  - increase the ACT's engagement with China and other Chinese speaking countries
  - attracting and better catering for tourists, overseas students and ACT and China-based business not only assists the ACT economy
  - highlight the value of knowing Mandarin and understanding Chinese culture, which should increase demand for proficient speakers of the language
  - encourage ACT students to start and/or continue to learn the language - one ALMA's major goals.

Len Waugh, ALMA member and former ALMA Vice President, has been the main driver of this initiative, assisted by Mandy Scott and Cong Changxin (Suzie). They have met with a number of people and organisations including the ACT Commissioner for International Engagement, Study Canberra, Visit Canberra, the ANU, and Canberra Business Chamber

### **What's in store for 2017-2018?**

Looking forward, in 2017-2018 it is my intention that the Committee will:

- implement a new process for developing the CAECC budget that allows for more input from the Committee and Director, before being approved by the Committee
- work with the Director to action the consultant's recommendations aimed at modernising the administration and financial management of the CAECC
- finalising CAECC staff reporting lines, position descriptions and policies
- finalising the remaining CAECC-related policies that have yet to be approved by the Committee
- assist the Director in recruiting new staff as a matter of priority
- aim to increase the community tutoring project and
- continue to strengthen ties with the Chinese community, including through collaboration with Chinese community language schools regarding Mandarin programs for non-beginners who do not have native speakers in their immediate family.

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 next Committee to move away from operational matters to more strategic ones.

I would like to thank Dr Mandy Scott for running the community relations sub-committee, Amelia Tandy and Wilson Yeung for acting as the Delegate (contact point between the Committee and CAECC staff), Tracey McRoberts for her work as Treasurer, Ms Kristyn Worner for her work as Assistant Treasurer (in particular her work on the risk assurance matrix for the replacement outdoor play equipment and the re-painting of the CAECC).

I would also like to thank all Committee members for their openness and willingness to work collectively for the benefit of ALMA and the CAECC.

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.

**Jaan Murphy**

President, ALMA

30 October 2017.