



From 1

(un-named) national survey: that at least one in ten adult Australians is functionally illiterate in English, and that 11 per cent of those surveyed could not identify the expiry date on a driver's licence.

In recognition of the problem, the ALIA Literacy Section was formed in 1979. Its aims, briefly, were to plan, to educate, to inform and to promote the literacy issue; and to coordinate the activities of related bodies.

By happy coincidence, the national sections for Public Libraries and Literacy both found their homes in Melbourne during 1989. The situation was a fortuitous one, given that we were on the threshold of International Literacy Year 1990. Librarians from both sections, together with local literacy workers, began to plan a joint national conference for 1990, which would address a wide range of issues relating to adult literacy.

Read all about it?

These plans have now crystallised into Libraries and Literacy: Read All About it?, a 2-day conference to be held in Melbourne, 2-3 April 1990. A landmark conference in many ways -- it is to be the only national conference for ALIA in recognition of International Literacy Year.

During the planning stages, librarians from the two national sections, joined together in a profitable exchange of ideas and inspiration. With exchange of ideas as its foundation, it is anticipated that the conference will also bring together people who work in areas associated with adult literacy -- librarians, literacy workers, librarianship students and educators.

Margaret Whitlam, Chair of the National Consultative Council for International Literacy Year, will open the conference at 9 am on Monday 2 April. The scene is then set for a myriad of workshops, to be presented by well-known librarians and literacy workers, connected with local and interstate adult literacy programs.

Workshops are planned to address a wide range of issues, from what we mean by being literate, to national adult literacy research projects. Along this spectrum are ranged topics such as:

- * how adults learn
- * national scene: levels of competency in the community
- * social and economic costs of low levels of literacy and numeracy
- * how to recognise literacy needs and

respond to them in the library

- * choosing literacy materials and their use in library-based programs
- * programs that have worked well in public libraries
- * becoming part of literacy networks
- * policy development and planning at the State level
- * roles of education for adult literacy issues in librarianship courses.

International Literacy Year will offer a challenge to librarians to consider the role they can play in their communities, in conjunction with literacy workers.

This issue of *inCite* contains a registration form for Libraries and Literacy: Read All About it? Join us at this landmark conference.

Denise Marshall/Jane King



Margaret Whitlam, Chair of the National Consultative Council for International Literacy Year, will open Libraries and Literacy: Read All About it?



International Literacy Year

READING 1990

Adult Education at Northcote Library

Northcote Library has long been committed to providing educational services for the local community. One of the most successful projects is the library's Adult Literacy and Basic Education program, funded by the Northern Metropolitan Council of Further Education from Victorian Government recurrent funds.

The program caters to the needs of around fifty students drawn largely from the Northcote area, 80 per cent of whom are women from non-English speaking backgrounds. Three per cent of participants are also from Aboriginal backgrounds, and 37 per cent have some form of disability.

Many students enrol to improve their skills so that they can retrain either for current employment or in order to facilitate their return to the workforce. Others do so to keep up with the progress of their children or grandchildren at school, and to help them with their homework. Some students see the courses as an important step in the process of being able to live independently.

One outcome of the program has been the magazine, *A Mixed Company of New Writers*, conceived by the students themselves, who felt that the title reflected the various ages, ethnicities, gender and needs of those involved. As well as helping with illustrations, typing, pagination and layout, the students wrote their own press releases and a report on the endeavour for *Fine Print*, the Adult Literacy and Basic Education journal.

The Library is coordinating Northcote Council's International Literacy Year activities for 1990.

Roger Coleman

