

Adult & Community Education Newsletter



Selwyn Library Arthurs Pass Trail event.

Long Term Learner Space – How our library network contributes to Adult Learning

Libraries from across the motu play a significant role in supporting lifelong learning within communities. Beyond their traditional function as places to access books and information, libraries provide welcoming, accessible environments where adult learners can develop new skills, expand their knowledge, and connect with others.

Across towns and cities, library spaces host workshops, courses, discussion groups, and digital learning sessions that respond to local interests and needs. They offer opportunities for people to build confidence with technology, improve literacy and language skills, explore creative pursuits, and engage with topics that support employment, wellbeing, and civic participation.

By providing free or low-cost learning opportunities in a trusted public setting, libraries help remove barriers that can prevent adults from continuing their education. In doing so, they contribute to stronger, more informed, and more connected communities. For this issue we spoke to several librarians across the motu about the learning spaces they create and curate and we highlight the varied approach and drivers that each takes towards delivery of ACE in their communities.



Ōtautahi Christchurch

In Ōtautahi Christchurch, the learning/teaching role is deeply embedded in the history and ongoing work of Christchurch City Libraries, where learning is considered a core part of their purpose.

The origins of the Christchurch library service date back to 1859, when it began as a mechanics' institute established to educate tradespeople and provide opportunities for further learning. Lectures and educational courses were central to its activities. That foundation continues to shape the organisation today. As Acting Community Libraries Manager Kate Ogden notes, learning has always been part of the library's DNA.

Over time, the form that learning takes has evolved in response to community needs. Kate, who has worked with Christchurch libraries since 2002, recalls a strong early focus on addressing the digital divide. Libraries offered introductory sessions on using computers, navigating the internet, and building basic digital skills at a time when home access to technology was not commonplace. Christchurch City Libraries established a computer laboratory at its Gloucester Street site as early as 2000, creating a place where people could both access and learn to use digital tools. The library service also led innovation in the sector, becoming the first in the southern hemisphere to launch a website and online catalogue.

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Whakatauki

*Mā te huruhuru
ka rere te manu.*

*Adorn the bird with
feathers so it may fly.*

Learning initiatives extend across all age groups, including programmes that support parents and caregivers of preschool children. These sessions focus on helping adults choose appropriate books, read effectively with children, and support early development. Librarians have developed specialist skills to deliver these programmes, recognising the important role they play in supporting families and encouraging early literacy.



For adults, libraries offer a wide range of short courses and one-off sessions designed to provide accessible entry points into new areas of interest. These “taster” opportunities allow people to explore subjects without a long-term commitment, while also providing a setting where participants can meet others and build a sense of belonging within their community.

Christchurch City Libraries has also invested in dedicated technology and creative learning spaces. Across three active learning sites in Ōtautahi, learners can experiment with equipment such as sewing machines, embroidery machines, laser cutters, 3D printers, and tools for sticker and design work. Staff are available on site to guide users as they learn to operate equipment and develop new skills. These spaces support practical, hands-on learning and make emerging technologies more accessible.

Intergenerational learning is another area of focus. Through initiatives such as Gen Connect older adults are paired with secondary students who provide support with digital technology like using a smart phone, tablet and laptop. In return, students gain valuable life experience and communication skills. This reciprocal model supports digital inclusion while strengthening understanding between age groups.

Libraries also provide space for language and cultural learning. At New Brighton Library, for example, the Kōrero me te Reo group brings people together to practise te reo Māori in an informal, supportive environment. Such programmes offer opportunities for language development while also strengthening community participation.

As digital services and information sources continue to expand, libraries play a key role in helping people navigate an increasingly complex environment. Christchurch City Libraries provides access to LinkedIn Learning. LinkedIn Learning is an online education and skills development platform that offers a large library of expert-led courses in areas such as business, technology and creative skills. The platform includes thousands of courses taught by industry professionals, covering topics from software and digital tools to leadership and professional development. Courses are typically structured as short video segments and are suitable for a range of skill levels, from beginner to advanced.

Users can access the content at any time, track their progress, and often earn certificates upon completion, which can be shared or used to support employment or professional learning goals.

Terry Uriarau

Terry Uriarau is a regular adult learner at Ōtautahi/Christchurch Linwood Library. Terry grew up in the Hawkes Bay and left school at fourteen to join the military. When he completed his time there, he chose to stay in Christchurch. After his adult children had left home he chose to fill his time with study. Terry visits the Linwood Library every day and is currently completing a diploma in Quantity Surveying online. Terry says he was used to studying face to face and found it hard to relearn in a digital world, but the library staff provided great support to help him get to grips with online learning. “The library staff have the skills in fields to help and without their support I would have stopped learning. I will keep going now until the library doors close.” Terry says the library provides a space without distraction and “there is no better learning place than here.”

<https://my.christchurchcitylibraries.com/library-stories/>

Across the network, librarians see themselves as information specialists who support learning in many forms. Programme, Events and Learning Manager Hayley Browne describes libraries as a trusted source of guidance in a rapidly changing world. While the future shape of learning may continue to evolve, Christchurch's libraries remain focused on providing reliable spaces, knowledgeable support, and practical opportunities that help people build skills and confidence at every stage of life. "We are a trusted brand, and we are here to help people navigate their future. We help and walk side by side with people as they follow their learning journey."

Waimakariri

Luke Sole, District Libraries Manager for Waimakariri District Council, oversees a network of three libraries located in Rangiora, Kaiapoi and Oxford. Like many public libraries, Waimakariri Libraries play an important role in connecting communities, particularly those in more rural or outlying areas.

Waimakariri has a slightly older population than neighbouring districts, with residents on average around 10 years older. Traditionally, this has meant strong use of core library services such as book lending and reading. As the libraries have developed into community hubs, the focus has broadened to include new programmes and services designed to attract a wider range of people and encourage longer, more regular visits.

In 2024, Waimakariri Libraries joined Alzheimers New Zealand's Dementia Friendly Recognition Programme and are now accredited as Working to be Dementia Friendly. This recognises that the libraries meet key criteria across five dementia-friendly standards. Libraries provide shared reading opportunities and specialised resources such as memory cards and targeted book collections, designed to prompt memories and support engagement for people in the early stages of dementia.

Alongside these initiatives, the libraries continue to deliver structured learning programmes, including digital skills classes aligned with curriculum expectations. They have also expanded into more experiential and informal lifelong learning opportunities. These include author talks and practical sessions such as repair cafés, where people can use sewing machines and other equipment to fix household items. These activities provide different entry points into learning, often in ways that feel social and practical rather than classroom-based.

Programmes are designed for a wide range of ages. In some cases, activities originally developed for children have been adapted to suit adult learners. The libraries also host Talking Cafés, providing space for community-led discussions. These are considered a form of informal learning, where people come together to share experiences and information. Recent sessions have included a Death Café, offering a supportive space for people to discuss end-of-life matters and experiences of loss.

Recognising that library staff are generalists, Waimakariri Libraries often work with external facilitators to deliver

specialist courses and workshops.

Partnerships are a key part of their approach.

With limited budgets, the libraries collaborate with organisations that share similar goals and can bring outreach funding or expertise, making effective use of library spaces.

One recent partnership was participation in the MSD-supported Digi-Coach: Pathway to Employment pilot. This 13-week, work-based learning programme helps job seekers build digital skills while supporting their communities. Between February and June 2025, 30 participants across Canterbury, Wellington and Waikato delivered around 7,000 hours of digital support to approximately 4,700 learners.

Through this programme, two young job seekers were based at Waimakariri Libraries, where they ran digital skills sessions and provided one-on-one support. The sessions were well attended, with many participants returning regularly. The experience also gave the job seekers insight into the role libraries play in community life, while allowing them to build confidence and practical experience in a supportive, real-world environment.

Library staff also assist community members with accessing government services and completing online processes. Through the Book a Librarian service, people can receive one-on-one help with tasks such as passport applications and navigating official websites. Luke describes this as a collaborative community response model, where libraries provide practical learning support alongside their traditional roles.



Selwyn

Mat Logan is Culture, Content and Learning Manager at Selwyn District Council.

Selwyn District, in the Canterbury region, had a population of 78,144 at the 2023 Census, reflecting growth of 29 percent since 2018 and making it one of New Zealand's fastest-growing districts. Selwyn Libraries provides free membership to residents and ratepayers and operates branches in Rolleston (including Te Ara Ātea), Lincoln, Darfield and Leeston, as well as a mobile library serving smaller communities. In 2023–24 the libraries recorded nearly 492,000 visits, highlighting their role as widely used community facilities offering access to books, digital resources and programmes.

Mat says public libraries across New Zealand play an important role in providing accessible learning opportunities.

In Selwyn, the focus is on short “taster” courses designed to introduce people to new skills and interests. These programmes are intended to reach beyond traditional book borrowers and engage a broader range of residents, including those who may not otherwise use library services. The aim is to spark interest and support people to continue their learning journey with other community providers. Selwyn Libraries positions itself at the start of that pathway, offering introductory experiences rather than in-depth training.

Programmes are developed with input from community experts, enthusiasts and qualified tutors. Selwyn Libraries delivers around 2,000 programmes each year, with approximately 30,000 attendances. Ideas come from publishing trends, community feedback and staff suggestions, with many concepts explored before a final schedule is confirmed. Topics range widely and have included gin making, fly fishing and lawn care. Most sessions run for 60 to 90 minutes, while some courses, such as te reo Māori and other language classes, run over several weeks to allow more sustained learning.



A Selwyn Library Learners group on a field visit.

Mat notes that these programmes also support community connection. Participants meet others with similar interests and often attend with family members, sometimes spanning generations. While some sessions have a small fee, library members often receive discounted rates.

Selwyn’s rapid growth has brought increasing diversity. Libraries host informal sessions for new residents to meet and share information on practical topics such as banking and services in New Zealand. These gatherings provide opportunities for people to build local networks.

The district extends from the Canterbury coast to Arthur’s Pass, and outreach services help ensure residents in more remote areas can also take part. Library staff run programmes in places such as Arthur’s Pass and Castle Hill, with recent examples including a night sky viewing session and a landscape drawing workshop. These outreach activities are part of the library’s approach to providing district-wide access to learning opportunities and community spaces.

Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

Shirley Reyno, Team Leader Whānau Learning and Alexis McCullough, Whānau Learning Specialist, are part of the team supporting community learning across the Auckland Council Libraries network. They explain that community learning in Auckland Libraries began with a strong focus on digital and technical skills. Over time, the programme has expanded to include literacy and numeracy, health education, English language support, and a range of social and wellbeing topics.

In 2025, twelve Auckland libraries took part in Adult Learners’ Week He Tangata Mātauranga Festival, highlighting the contribution libraries make to lifelong learning.

Most community learning is organised by librarians within individual libraries with topics reflecting local demand. Alongside this, the centralised Whānau Learning team coordinates regional programmes where there is shared interest across several communities.

Partnerships are central to this delivery. Whānau Learning partners with organisations such as Literacy Aotearoa, the DIAA and other literacy and community organisations to extend what they can offer. Individual libraries also build their own relationships. For example, Mt Roskill Library has recently partnered with Stroke New Zealand to deliver sessions on stroke management, providing practical information for people affected by stroke and their families. Where there is strong demand, the Whānau Learning team identifies opportunities to partner with organisations connected at the community level to look into offering courses more widely across the network.

Auckland has 21 local boards, many of which work together in clusters to plan community activities. Libraries share ideas across these clusters, helping to spread successful initiatives to other sites.

The Whānau Learning team has also helped to strengthen Auckland Council Libraries’ relationship with ACE Aotearoa. In recent years they have hosted two rounds of the Successfully Teaching Adults course, with around 50 staff attending. Alexis says the course has helped staff adopt a learner-centred approach, focusing on listening to learners, understanding their needs, and delivering services that are accessible and relevant.

Some programmes respond to topics that are less often discussed in public settings. Death Cafés, held monthly at ten libraries, provide a facilitated space where people can talk about end-of-life planning and practical matters. These sessions are based on an international model and are designed as open discussions rather than support groups. Participants share information and experiences in a respectful and informative environment. Death Cafés are one of the initiatives delivered through the Whānau Learning team’s partnership with Mercy Hospice and Honohono Tātou Katoa Creating Compassionate Communities Charitable Trust.

Another example is BrainCharge, a programme first

developed at Whangaparāoa Library and later offered at other nearby locations. It provides structured activities aimed at supporting cognitive health for older adults. As interest has grown, the Whānau Learning team is working on regionalising this programme so it can be delivered widely across the network, enabled through staff training and consistent promotion and marketing.

Across Auckland Libraries, around 3,000 adult learning programmes are offered each year, attracting approximately 60,000 attendees.

Last year, the Whānau Learning team completed Auckland Council Libraries' Literacy Plan for 2025–2028. This plan sets out how their team will work across the library network, strengthen partnerships, and ensure that community learning continues to reflect the needs of Auckland's diverse population.

You can find out more about Auckland Libraries Learning Community in the ACE Aotearoa Spring 2025 Newsletter.

New Plymouth

Angela Jowitt, Manager Libraries at New Plymouth District Council, oversees a network of seven libraries that provide a range of adult learning opportunities across the district. While resources limit how much can be offered, librarians use their own skills and local knowledge to run practical, community-focused sessions.

When the libraries became part of Puke Ariki in 2003, they worked alongside the museum to share knowledge and programmes. More recently, the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery and Len Lye Centre joined this partnership to form the Council's Cultural Experiences Group. Staff of the three entities now collaborate to plan events and learning activities, drawing on each area's strengths.

The libraries offer digital literacy support, a small makerspace with weekly tutor sessions, and classes such as sewing. Staff also provide one-to-one help with recent examples seeing library staff assist Mike Stewart-Jacks to print

a new cog to fix his concrete mixer. Mike measured up the old worn out part and worked with the library to create the 3D file. Other initiatives include a dementia-friendly book group run with Alzheimers Taranaki, evening craft sessions, and a strong programme of cultural activities. Angela says that the Te Ao Māori offerings have been particularly popular with sessions including weaving workshops, an exploration of Tukutuku panels, Matariki events and Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori sessions and learning opportunities.

Despite tight budgets, the team continues to build partnerships and explore joint programming so they can extend learning opportunities across the district.





Moana Vā – Navigators of Pacific Pride

In Ōtautahi, Christchurch, a small community group is redefining what learning and belonging can look like for Pacific Rainbow+ people and their families. Moana Vā, Navigators of Pacific Pride, was founded in 2022 by Vui Suli Tuitaape, a nurse, health promoter, and fitness trainer with a passion for holistic wellbeing and community empowerment.

Vui's work has always carried a message: health is wealth. He's dedicated to improving health outcomes for Pacific people, addressing Rainbow+ inequities, and promoting wellness in every sense, physical, emotional, spiritual, and social.

As a Sunday school teacher, Vui saw how young Pacific Rainbow+ people struggled to find spaces of safety and understanding. He saw a lot of himself in those young people who were navigating the world carrying multiple layers of identity, being Pacific, being Rainbow, and being part of a strong faith-based community that didn't always accept them.

What began as a conversation with his community soon grew into a movement. Within 18 months, Moana Vā had become a registered charity, a place of support, education, and connection in Ōtautahi.

At the heart of Moana Vā's work lies

a belief that education is not confined to classrooms, it happens in community, through talanoa, storytelling, and shared experience.

General Manager Lana Shields embodies this philosophy. A proud mother of a Rainbow daughter, she understands the power of learning that begins with empathy.

"Many Pacific families genuinely want to support their Rainbow whānau, they just don't always know how," says Lana. "Our role is to help them find that way, grounded in love, understanding, and our shared Pacific values."

Moana Vā's educational approach blends cultural heritage, social learning, and emotional literacy. Their signature workshops, "Ally? or Accomplice?", invite participants to explore Pacific concepts of gender and identity, tracing the long history of sexual fluidity that

existed across many island cultures before colonial influences.

These sessions are interactive, weaving discussion, and storytelling. Participants learn practical ways to be allies and supporters or, accomplices walking the talk. Each course builds confidence and understanding in ways that are deeply personal and transformative.

"The learning that happens in these sessions is quiet but powerful," says Lana. "It's about kindness, empathy, and learning to navigate difference with compassion."

Many who take part in these sessions stay involved with Moana Vā, joining community events, volunteering, or simply being present for others. This ongoing participation reflects the organisation's belief that learning is lifelong, relational, and woven into everyday life.



For Moana Vā, learning happens wherever people feel seen and supported. “Education for us is woven into talanoa and shared experience,” says Lana. “It happens in spaces of trust around food, laughter, and connection.”

The group’s reach extends beyond the Pacific community. Among their learners are four Ugandan asylum seekers, now settled in Aotearoa after Moana Vā helped them navigate the refugee process.

This inclusive philosophy is captured in their motto: “All flavours welcome.” It reflects both their cultural openness and their commitment to learning that strengthens communities rather than separating them.

Education also takes unexpected forms at Moana Vā. Their weekly “Moana Vibes” group fitness sessions are as much about connection and cultural celebration as they are about exercise. Set to Pacific music, the 45-minute classes bring together participants each week to move, sweat, and connect.

Another initiative is their hot yoga programme, taught by Aotearoa’s only Tongan yoga instructor. These free, six-week courses create a welcoming environment where learners can strengthen body, spirit, and cultural identity all at once.

Lana says the group intentionally holds sessions in spaces where people might not normally feel comfortable. “We choose venues that feel inclusive as it helps participants step into new spaces, both physically and personally.”

While Moana Vā receives no ongoing government funding, it has become a cornerstone of informal, community-led education in the Pacific Rainbow space – from digital storytelling and social media learning resources to workshops, movement classes, and wellbeing programmes.

As Lana reflects, “It’s about helping people to be who they are, to be proud, spiritual, Pacific, and accepted. We balance it all out with love and respect.”

Find out more at
<https://www.moanava.org/>

A Farewell to Ako Aotearoa – New Zealand’s National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence

Members of the ACE sector were collectively disappointed by the 2025 Budget decision to disestablish Ako Aotearoa.



Ako Aotearoa was established in 2007 as New Zealand’s national agency supporting excellence in tertiary teaching and learning. Hosted by Massey University, it operated for 18 years with a mandate to lift teaching quality and learner outcomes across the tertiary education system.

From its establishment, Ako Aotearoa focused on building teaching capability across universities, polytechnics, wānanga, private training establishments, the Adult and Community Education sector and industry training organisations. It designed and delivered professional development for educators, with a practical emphasis on effective pedagogy, learner engagement, assessment practice and inclusive teaching approaches. Alongside this, it funded and supported applied teaching-and-learning research, enabling providers to address sector-wide challenges and adopt proven practice through shared research outputs.

Over time, Ako Aotearoa developed a substantial body of resources and frameworks, including toolkits, guides and online materials supporting evidence-based, learner-centred and culturally responsive teaching. A significant part of its work involved strengthening outcomes for Māori and Pacific learners, embedding Te Tiriti-based and kaupapa Māori approaches, and supporting initiatives tailored to priority learner groups. Programmes such as Manako, Ako Aotearoa’s internationally recognised language, literacy, numeracy (LLN) and cultural capability programme for educators who work with adult learners, reflected this focus.

Ako Aotearoa also played a national leadership and convening role. It acted as a sector connector, creating networks that enabled institutions to share practice, scale innovation and reduce duplication.

From 2007 – 2025 Ako Aotearoa proudly managed Te Whatu Kairangi. Aotearoa Tertiary Educator Awards (previously known as the Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards). These national tertiary teaching awards celebrated outstanding tertiary educators who made a difference to learners, their whānau and communities.



In 2025, the Government made the decision to remove Ako funding.

Jill Tanner-Lloyd, National Communications and Marketing Manager at Ako Aotearoa, joined the organisation in 2008—when it had been operating for just 12 months. She expressed her disappointment about the impact this decision had on both learners and educators. Jill said that throughout its history, Ako Aotearoa maintained a clear purpose: supporting successful learners through strong teaching practice and advocating consistently for quality learning and teaching. Jill says this commitment was reflected in the way Ako Aotearoa approached the learner experience, with staff emphasising the partnership between educator and learner rather than viewing students solely through funding measures.

Jill also highlights the value of Ako Aotearoa's sector relationships, including its long-standing partnership with ACE Aotearoa. She notes that ACE has played an important role across communities and learner groups that a national agency could not always reach in the same way, and that Ako Aotearoa relied on strong partnerships to remain connected to the practical needs of tutors, trainers and practitioners.

One area of delivery Jill identifies as a highlight is Ako Aotearoa's cultural capability work, including programmes transferred from the National Centre for Literacy and Numeracy. This enabled Ako Aotearoa to support culturally responsive teaching and inclusive approaches at scale across the sector. Jill also highlighted the development of the Dyslexia-Friendly Quality Mark as a major contribution, noting that the closure of Ako Aotearoa means sector knowledge and specialist capability built over time may be harder to maintain.

A strong example of the relationship between Ako Aotearoa and ACE Aotearoa is the contribution of Jennifer Leahy, who has been a key collaborator between the two organisations for more than a decade. Her connection began when she was contracted by Ako Aotearoa to deliver a workshop on Collecting Evidence of Learner Benefit. That workshop became the starting point for ongoing collaboration between ACE and Ako Aotearoa, with Jennifer continuing to contribute to professional development delivery. Following the COVID period, Jennifer returned to ACE Aotearoa in a contracted role and has worked four days a week with Ako Aotearoa and one day a week as Teaching Standards Advisor with ACE Aotearoa.

Jennifer said that the closure of Ako Aotearoa represents a significant loss for practitioners, particularly due to the reduction in professional development opportunities across both online and face-to-face formats. She highlighted the value of the national forums, events, and sector convening work that Ako Aotearoa supported, as well as its contribution through research funding. This included support for ACE Aotearoa's Circles of Teaching and Learning research project, which created opportunities for collaboration and ensured the ACE sector remained connected into wider teaching and learning discussions.

In a joint update released by the Tertiary Education Commission & Massey University they acknowledged the significant contribution Ako Aotearoa made to advancing teaching and learning.

Massey University confirmed it would continue hosting the Ako Aotearoa website to ensure ongoing access to its widely used learning resources, research and reports. Website hosting has been secured until the end of 2026, with work underway by Massey to explore longer-term options that preserve the integrity and accessibility of these materials.

Ako Aotearoa formally wound down operations at the end of 2025. Staff roles were disestablished as of 31 December, with most staff concluding mid-December in line with the university's holiday period. Director, Corrina Gestro-Best is working with a small team through to March 2026 to support the orderly transition of resources.

At the conclusion of its operations, Ako Aotearoa's impact was reflected in more than \$11.5 million invested in funded projects, over 1,500 resource outputs shared, more than 5,000 educators supported through professional development, over 320 nationally recognised teaching award recipients, twelve regional forums held in the last three years, and close to 1,500 participants at professional learning and development events in 2025.

CEO of ACE Aotearoa, Hannah Pia Baral, said that during its 18 years of operation, Ako Aotearoa worked in partnership with educators, institutions and sector organisations to strengthen teaching practice and learner success. She is pleased that access to resources and reports will remain available to the sector in 2026. "We will miss our colleagues within Ako and the collaborative relationship that resulted in great outcomes for adult community education".



Men's Sheds and Adult Community Education in Aotearoa New Zealand

Men's Sheds have become an important part of the adult and community education landscape across Aotearoa New Zealand. Supported nationally by MENZSHED New Zealand, more than 130 Sheds operate as practical learning spaces where mainly older men can meet, share skills, and stay connected to their communities. While they are often associated with woodworking or repair projects, Sheds are also places of informal learning, mentoring, and community service. Members exchange knowledge, learn new skills, and contribute to local projects in a way that is accessible and welcoming. To put it in a rather large nutshell, a shed brings men together in one community space to share their skills, have a laugh, and work on practical tasks individually (personal projects) or as a group (for the shed or community).

In addition, Sheds have hosted Men's Health Expos at which significant numbers of health checks were completed, and several major health issues were identified among participants.

Research into Men's Sheds was undertaken by Emeritus Professor Edwina Pio and funded by The Selwyn Foundation in 2025. The research investigated the health and wellbeing impact of Men's Sheds on their members in New Zealand with results

published in June 2025.

Using surveys, focus groups, and interviews across several Sheds, the study found that membership was linked to a clear reduction in loneliness and improved wellbeing. Before joining a Shed, 29 men in the study recorded high loneliness scores; after joining, this reduced to eight. Many participants described the Shed as providing routine, friendship, and a sense of purpose. Activities ranged from woodworking and metalwork to cooking, mentoring, and intergenerational projects with schools. These findings reinforce the role Sheds play as informal education environments that support lifelong learning and social connection.

For the adult and community education sector, Men's Sheds show how learning can take place outside formal classrooms. They provide practical pathways for skill sharing, peer learning, and community participation, especially for people who may not engage with traditional education programmes. They also demonstrate the value of partnership between community groups, local councils, health providers, and education organisations. In many communities, Sheds work alongside libraries, training providers, and community health

services to reach people who might otherwise be isolated.

The research also highlighted areas for future development. Sustainable funding, including paid management roles, was identified as important for long-term stability. The report recommends encouraging participation from under-represented groups, including Māori, Pasifika, migrants, and men from a wider range of work backgrounds. Some Sheds are already exploring new technologies and broadening their programmes, showing how these spaces can continue to evolve as centres of practical learning.

For those involved in adult and community education, Men's Sheds offer a useful example of how local initiatives can support wellbeing, build skills, and strengthen community connections. Their success reflects simple principles: shared purpose, accessible learning, and strong community partnerships.

Reference

Pio, E. (2025). *Researching the health and wellbeing impact of Men's Sheds on their members in New Zealand*. Auckland, New Zealand: The Selwyn Foundation. ISBN 978-0-473-74852-4 (PDF)

Registrations now open – Hui Fono and ACE Conference 2026

26–27 May 2026
Tamaki Makaurau,
Auckland

Registrations are now open for this year's Hui Fono and ACE Conference. Following the successful trial last year, the events will again be held on consecutive days. Please note that both events are scheduled earlier than usual, in late May, so we encourage you to secure your place as soon as possible.

Hui Fono will be held on 26 May, 9.30am–5.00pm, with the ACE Conference taking place on 27 May. The ACE Annual Awards will be held on the evening of 27 May.

All events will take place at the Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre in Auckland.

This year's conference theme is *Beyond the Hype: Applying Artificial and Ancestral Intelligences for Transformative Learning*. The theme builds on last year's discussions and reflects feedback from practitioners who asked for practical guidance on applying new ideas in everyday teaching and community learning.

The kaupapa shifts the focus from ideas to action. It explores how artificial intelligence can be used deliberately to support learning design, systems and organisational capability, alongside ancestral intelligence — the cultural knowledge, values and relational practices that guide ethical, community-centred learning. Together, these approaches provide a grounded way to innovate while maintaining quality, relevance and responsibility.

Hui Fono and the ACE Conference will centre practical, real-world learning through case studies, demonstrations and workshops. *Beyond the Hype* is designed for practitioners who want tools and insights they can use immediately, while staying anchored in values, culture and what truly enables transformative learning.

We are pleased that this year's MC for conference will be Dr Edmond Fehoko, Senior Lecturer in Human Nutrition and Associate Dean Pacific at the University of Otago. Dr Fehoko's research focuses on Pacific health and wellbeing through culturally grounded methodologies such as *Talanoa*, and he brings extensive experience in community-based education and leadership. He is also Co-Chair of ACE Aotearoa.

Hui Fono will have two emcees this year – Nohorua Hawaikirangi Parata and Saylene Ulberg-Tanielu.

Nohorua Hawaikirangi Parata

Nohorua Hawaikirangi Parata (Rongowhakaata, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Ruanui, Ngāti Toa and Te Ātiawa) brings a rare combination of whakapapa, lived experience, and infectious energy to any

space he walks into. Bestowed with a tūpuna name and shaped by legacy leadership, including the political mana of his māmā Meka Whitiri and his late godfather, the beloved Parekura Horomia, Nohorua carries the weight of that lineage with remarkable humility.

He has served as tumuaki takirua (co-president) of Te Mana Ākonga, the National Māori Tertiary Students' Association, and as a research intern for Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, where he worked on digital solutions for iwi. By day he works in public health. By the weekend, you might find him on the golf course with his NZ Sāmoan best mate (follow their haerenga at Brown Boy Bogeys on IG).

Nohorua made his MC debut at Hui Fono 2023 in Whakatū, mentored by Pale "in the fale" Sauni, a veteran of the craft. He went on to support the 2023 and 2024 ACE Conferences alongside MC Te Ataahia Hurihanganui, before stepping into his solo Hui Fono MC role in 2025. This year, he returns to the Hui Fono floor alongside Saylene Ulberg-Tanielu.





Saylene Ulberg-Tanielu

Saylene Ulberg-Tanielu is a powerhouse facilitator and Pacific educator. She brings warmth, cultural depth, and sharp facilitation instincts to Hui Fono. Her work has long centred on elevating Pacific values and learning frameworks in adult education, weaving concepts like tautua (servant leadership) and talanoa into practice in ways that genuinely transform how educators engage with Pacific learners.

Currently pursuing a Masters in Education Practice, Saylene is someone who keeps growing, keeps learning, and keeps showing up for her communities.

Financial Assistance

We know getting to a national conference isn't always straightforward – there's travel, time away from your organisation, and the cost of registration to think about. That's why we want to make sure you know that ACE Aotearoa is offering financial support to attend the ACE Conference 2026.

If cost has been a reason you've been sitting on the fence, don't let it hold you back and apply for the financial subsidy.

- ★ To check eligibility, access the [ACE Aotearoa conference website ACE Conference | Adult and Community Education](#)

Places are limited for both events and early registrations are encouraged to avoid missing out.

- ★ To register, visit the ACE Aotearoa website: aceaotearoa.org.nz/events/ace-conference

ACE Conference 2026 Keynote Speaker Announced –

Dr Mahsa McCauley

ACE Aotearoa is delighted to announce the ACE Conference 2026 keynote speaker for day two:

Dr Mahsa McCauley, Chair of the AI Forum New Zealand and one of Aotearoa's foremost experts on artificial intelligence, education and policy.

Dr Mahsa McCauley is a UNESCO Communication and Information Commissioner, an Associate Professor of AI at Auckland University of Technology, and a Fulbright Scholar.

Her research spans AI, machine learning, Internet of Things (IoT) and cybersecurity, developed through partnerships with industry and government.

She serves on the boards of NZTech, EdTechNZ and the World Summit Awards, contributing to AI strategy and education initiatives aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

She is also the Founder and Director of She Sharp Charitable Trust – a volunteer-led organisation that supports women in technology and inspires secondary school girls into digital careers. They reach thousands through events and industry partnerships.

This year's conference theme is *Beyond the Hype: Applying Artificial and Ancestral Intelligences for Transformative Learning*, and Dr McCauley's keynote sits squarely within it.

Drawing on the concept of ako as a framework for reciprocal teaching and learning, she will explore how artificial intelligence is transforming not just what we teach, but how knowledge itself is created, shared and valued.

She will examine the mindsets and skills needed to navigate this shift – adaptive thinking, data literacy, and ethical judgment – and share practical examples from Aotearoa and internationally.

The session will close with a question that sits at the heart of the 2026 conference: *How do we prepare learners and educators not just to use AI, but to learn alongside it?*



ACE Aotearoa Awards Judges

Entries for the ACE Aotearoa Awards closed on March 13th with winners to be announced at the ACE Awards dinner to be held on the evening of 27 May at the Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre in Auckland.

This year's panel of judges are Hine McLetchie (Ngāpuhi), Anne Troy and Jo Nuttall.

Hine McLetchie (Ngāpuhi)

Hine is a senior staff member of Te Ataarangi ki Te Taihū o te Waka-a-Māui Inc with more than 30 years' experience across the Te Ataarangi movement and wider community sector. Her work spans regional and national contexts, including leadership roles in governance and advisory capacities, operational management, tutor training and tertiary and Adult and Community Education. Hine is a member of the ACE Sector Steering Group.



Anne Troy

Anne is an ESOL tutor and funded course coordinator at the Wellington High School Community Education Centre. She has been involved in ACE for over a decade and brings a deep knowledge of the sector. She is also a member of the ACE Aotearoa Board. Anne was on our inaugural panel of outside judges in 2025 and returns for a second year.



Jo Nuttall

Jo is Manager of Waiheke Adult Learning. She has a lifelong passion for her work in community education and for what it adds to the lives of students and her community. For Jo learning is exciting – it opens doors, is a place to make new friends and engage with diverse world views. She is a Taurira in her local te reo programme and joins the local community orchestra on Waiheke.



International

International Think Tank Meeting and Strategising for Education Stakeholders

Late last year, youth and adult education leaders from across Asia, the Pacific and beyond gathered in Vientiane, Lao PDR, for the *International Think Tank Meeting and Strategising for Education Stakeholders*. The event, held on 24–25 November, brought together 62 participants from 23 countries across Southeast and Central Asia, the Pacific and South Africa. The meeting focused on how the fast growth of digital technologies, particularly artificial intelligence and algorithm-driven platforms, is reshaping the way people learn, work and participate in society with no sector untouched by technological change.

For adult and community education providers, this raises important questions about access, inclusion and ethics and Think Tank discussions centred on how the adult learning sector can respond in ways that protect human rights, strengthen communities and ensure learners are equipped with the skills needed to navigate an increasingly digital world. Three key priorities framed the Think Tank's agenda. These were:

1. Advocacy, strengthening national, regional and global efforts to influence policy so that digital transformation in education remains human-centred and grounded in principles such as equity, climate justice and the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. Partnerships and ecosystem mapping, identifying the organisations and networks already working in this space and strengthening collaboration across sectors.



3. Building internal capability, including improving digital literacy across organisations, developing hybrid and online learning platforms, and establishing an ongoing international forum focused on artificial intelligence and digitalisation in education.

ACE Aotearoa was represented at the Think Tank by Chief Executive Hannah Pia Baral, who contributed to discussions and facilitated the final panel session, and panellist Peter-Clinton Isaac Foese who is ASPBAE President. Uwe Gartenschlaeger, Director and Chief Executive of DVV International – the global development

arm of the German Adult Education Association and Robbie Guevara ICAE President were the other two panellists.

All three highlighted the importance of building on existing networks and partnerships rather than starting from scratch and noted that strong collaboration across organisations remains essential. They also emphasised the need for clear and principled advocacy to ensure that conversations about technology lead to

meaningful action. Throughout the discussion, the panellists returned to the importance of human relationships in learning and community work, noting that education systems must continue to support people who are often not represented in policy discussions, including rural communities, migrants, refugees, indigenous peoples and women.

The panel also reflected on the history of the global adult learning movement and the role that civil society advocacy has played in advancing lifelong learning. Speakers pointed to examples of community-led education initiatives influencing national policy

and highlighted the revitalisation of indigenous languages, including te reo Māori, as an example of how education can strengthen identity and cultural sovereignty. Looking ahead, the panellists expressed cautious optimism about the future, emphasising the importance of intergenerational leadership, locally grounded approaches to advocacy and maintaining a strong focus on relationships and community voices as the sector navigates ongoing technological change.

Hannah also shared insights from the ACE Aotearoa 2025 AI conference.

“What struck me most was how much the conversations in Vientiane mirrored what our communities here in Aotearoa are already grappling with — how do we make sure technology serves people, not the other way around? It was a reminder that the questions our learners and providers are asking aren’t just local concerns. They’re global ones. And Aotearoa has real wisdom to contribute to that conversation,” said Hannah.

“The Think Tank was a valuable opportunity to exchange ideas with practitioners from different regions and to consider how international advocacy efforts can support local practice.

“The most powerful message from the gathering was that technology must remain a tool in service of people and communities and adult education has a critical role to play in ensuring that digital transformation supports inclusion, critical thinking and lifelong learning.”

Participants concluded the meeting by endorsing a Call for Action advocating for a rights-based, human- and planet-centred approach to youth and adult learning in the age of AI and digitalisation.



Read the Call for Action [here](https://www.aspbae.org)
<https://www.aspbae.org>

SheWeld: Creating Space for Women to Learn Welding

Kerry Cooper tutors welding through Fraser High School Adult and Community Education, but one of his classes has a distinctive focus. SheWeld is a women-only evening course designed to provide a supportive entry point for women who want to learn practical welding skills.

Kerry originally trained as a fitter welder more than 20 years ago. Growing up in Taranaki, he says that in those days many young men were encouraged into trades whether or not it suited them. While he enjoyed the craft of welding, he never felt comfortable in the culture of the workshop environment.



In the 1980s he took the opportunity to retrain as a teacher and completed a degree in social science. Teaching appealed to his interest in people and learning. He later became a technology teacher in secondary schools, teaching subjects such as metalwork and woodwork. Over time his trade background meant he was often asked to return to teaching in those areas.

Eight years ago Kerry began teaching welding through Fraser ACE.

The women-only course was developed after Kerry noticed that many women were hesitant to enrol in mixed trade classes. Some were unsure about the workshop environment or unsure whether they would feel comfortable asking questions. Creating a women-only space was a way to remove some of those barriers.

Now in its third year, SheWeld has become one of Kerry's most rewarding teaching experiences.

Each course runs over eight weeks with a three-hour session each week. Around twelve women enrol in the class, with usually eight attending regularly. Learners come from a wide range of backgrounds. Some are farmers who want practical repair skills, others are artists and makers interested in metalwork, while some simply want to try something new. Kerry says there is often a university engineering student in

the class who wants to better understand the practical side of welding.

The course is designed as a short introductory learning experience rather than a formal qualification. The focus is on building confidence and practical capability through hands-on learning.

The first session concentrates on workshop safety and familiarising learners with the equipment. Kerry encourages participants to switch the machines on, adjust the controls and



see how they work. For many learners it is their first time in a welding workshop, and this early exploration helps remove some of the intimidation associated with the tools and machinery.

By the second session the group begins practising basic welds, building on what they learned the previous week. As the course progresses, learners gain experience with grinding, welding and other basic metalwork skills that are common in engineering workshops.

Kerry sees his role as helping to demystify the craft.

"It's about helping people realise they can do this," he says. "Once the machines stop being intimidating, the learning comes quite quickly."

He recalls one learner who works in a senior role at Health Waikato. She arrives early for each class and often leaves covered in workshop dust but with a big smile. I think this course provides her with a completely different environment to what she has during her working day.

For Kerry, moments like that capture what adult community education is about. "We create opportunities for people to try something new, build confidence and develop practical skills in a supportive learning environment".

"The class has its own vibe," he says. "It's simply a group of women welding together and learning from the experience."

Our people

Celebrating Excellence: David Rowe Named Fraser ACE Tutor of the Year



Fraser ACE has named photography tutor David Rowe as its 2025 Tutor of the Year, recognising the care, consistency, and practical teaching he brings to his classes and to the wider Fraser ACE community.

David first came to Fraser ACE as a learner himself. After many years teaching karate and photographing tournaments and

gradings, photography grew from a hobby into a way to connect with others and share knowledge. He became involved with the tutor team and began teaching a regular "Studio Night" course. Twelve years ago, he designed and launched the more advanced Level 2 course, which continues to attract returning learners.

"My greatest joy comes from helping others," David says. "Photography can feel technical at first, but once people understand a few key ideas, they start to see the world differently. That's when the real learning begins."

His current Level 2 course builds on the manual photography skills learners gain at Level 1, shifting the focus from technical basics to creative practice. Classes are structured but flexible, with time to follow learner interests and explore new techniques.

"One of the best moments is seeing that 'Aha!' look when something suddenly clicks," David says. "I also enjoy watching past learners develop their own projects, whether that's portrait work, events photography, or setting up a small home studio."

Students value David's patient teaching style and clear explanations, and Fraser ACE staff note his reliability and willingness to contribute to programme planning. His approach reflects the strengths of adult community education — practical learning, supportive relationships, and courses shaped around learner needs.

Outside the classroom, David works across a wide range of photography, including weddings, events, corporate portraits, live performances, and fashion shoots. He enjoys collaborative creative portrait sessions, confidence-building projects that support community initiatives, and the technical challenge of fashion photography.

"Adult community education works because it's local and accessible," David says. "People come along to try something

new, meet others, and keep learning. Being part of that is a privilege."

ACE Aotearoa congratulates David on this well-deserved recognition and thanks him for his contribution to Fraser ACE and to adult community education.

Tauraki Rongo

Rutherford Community Education tutor Tauraki Rongo passed away in March.

Tauraki made a significant contribution to the organisation through his teaching and his commitment to learners. He was a dedicated advocate for the preservation and promotion of the Māori Cook Islands language and worked consistently to strengthen cultural knowledge within the community.

In addition to his tutoring role, Tauraki was a producer for Pacific Media Network's Cook Islands programming, supporting the visibility and continuity of Cook Islands language and culture through broadcasting.

His work has had a lasting impact on learners and colleagues at Rutherford. ACE Aotearoa extends condolences to his family, friends and the many people who worked and learned alongside him.



Peter Coolbear

News has been shared through the Ako Academy Facebook page of the passing of former Ako Aotearoa Director, Peter Coolbear. Peter died peacefully at home in Porirua on 15 February 2026.

Many in the sector will remember working with Peter and benefiting from his commitment to strengthening tertiary education and professional learning across Aotearoa. He played an important role in the early development of several key initiatives, including contributing to the establishment of the sector capability contract with the Tertiary Education Commission. Peter also served on the inaugural advisory group for the Ako Aotearoa Sector Support Grants (ASSG) and Professional Development Grants.

Peter was widely respected for his drive and his long-standing commitment to Ako Aotearoa and the wider tertiary education community.

Our thoughts are with his family and all those who worked alongside him over many years.



Noticeboard

He Tangata Mātauranga Adult Learners' Week 7–13 September 2026

He Tangata Mātauranga Adult Learners' Week will take place from 7–13 September 2026, providing an opportunity to recognise and celebrate adult learners across Aotearoa.

Adult Learners' Week highlights the role of Adult and Community Education (ACE) in connecting people with skills, knowledge, and opportunities. It supports participation, builds confidence, and contributes to stronger, more inclusive communities.

The 2026 theme, Finding Our Voice – Ko tōku reo, ko tōku ohooho! (My language or voice is my awakening power), encourages exploration of how learning supports self-expression, informed participation, and collective action. It also aligns with the importance of having a voice in an election year and the broader role of education in supporting self-determination.

Funding is available to support activities. Please review the criteria carefully before applying, noting that funding will not be approved for courses already part of an ACE programme. Requirements for the use of Adult Learners' Week branding should also be followed.

Further information and support please visit the website:
www.aceaotearoa.org.nz

Stay up with the Play!

Membership of ACE Aotearoa offers significant benefits. You have access to our carefully curated and well-thought-through suite of courses that are ACE focused. You receive regular updates on the sector and initiatives that are changing the way we work; you can attend the annual ACE conference, and your support helps us to deliver the advocacy and policy advice that keeps our sector strong. The cost of membership is extremely affordable, and your support enables us to support you. You might also want to share membership benefits with other organisations and encourage them to join our movement.

To join please visit our website
<https://www.aceaotearoa.org.nz/who-we-are/membership>

Is Your Organisation on the ACE Providers Map?

ACE Aotearoa regularly receives enquiries from learners looking for community-based learning opportunities. To help connect these learners with local education options, ACE Aotearoa maintains the ACE Providers Map – a national directory showing where adult and community education is taking place across Aotearoa.

So far in 2025, the map has already been searched over 3,300 times, highlighting the strong interest in lifelong learning and community education.

If your organisation offers adult and community education programmes and isn't currently featured, ACE Aotearoa invites you to get in touch to have your details added. The map is open to all providers that meet the ACE definition – you don't need to be ACE-funded to be included.

Organisations are also encouraged to check their existing listings to ensure information is accurate and up to date. If your organisation doesn't have a physical site, ACE Aotearoa can place a pin on the city or town where you are based so learners searching in your region can still find you.

To view the map or check your listing, visit www.aceaotearoa.org.nz/ace-providers-map. For more information or assistance, contact the ACE Aotearoa team at admin@aceaotearoa.org.nz

Update our Mailing List and Send in Your News!

ACE Aotearoa currently sends out hard copies of the quarterly newsletter to those on our mailing list. But did you know the newsletter is also available on our website? If you want to save paper and postage costs and just download the newsletter from the website, then please email Viv Reti at ACE Aotearoa and we will remove your hard copy subscription.

Vivienne.Reti@aceaotearoa.org.nz