



2004 FLW Case Study



Flexible Learning in Regional Communities





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Introduction

As a TAFE Institute in a large training system, we hold a very privileged position. We are frontline in terms of the latest news and events, funding opportunities and access to learning resources. During Flexible Learning Week, SWTAFE will host a Flexible Learning Regional forum as a way of sharing our knowledge and access to information with our regional partners and colleagues.

With the goal of being the “first choice provider of flexible and online learning in south west Victoria”, the hosting of a regional forum is consistent with our Institute’s strategy that includes the promotion of flexible delivery options via local flexible learning networks such as RURAL Net.

The Challenge

The population of rural Australia is one of the most formally undereducated groups in this country. As such, there is a genuine fear and mistrust of seeking out further education in a formal sense. As well, modern technologies such as the Internet are not seen by this group to be a ‘natural’ way to receive their education.¹

With that challenge in mind, the aim of the Workshop is to help educate and expose our regional providers by allowing them to:

- observe how others in the system are *generating new practices* that incorporate ICT technologies into their teaching and learning
- provided them with an opportunity to access and observe new resources that allow for *smarter use of existing technologies*, and
- *expand their professional networks* to assist them with the issues facing the cohort of regional and remote students.

The workshop will be promoted via the Flexible Learning Week website to enable wider community participation during Flexible Learning Week 2004.

¹ Rural Training Council of Australia: <<http://www.rtca.farmwide.com.au>>



The Solution

This will be the second regional forum we have held during Flexible Learning Week. Following the conclusion of our 2003 Forum, there were requests that the forum be an annual event because of the collaborative benefits the day provided.

As noted in a letter received from Trish Stephens, Simpson District and Community Centre Inc, the Forum plays a positive role supporting collaboration and sharing. As the newly appointed head of the community centre, Trish wrote, "thank you for a really interesting and informative day yesterday. I feel so much more comfortable with the concepts of flexible learning now."

FLW Regional Forum – 2003



The 2004 Regional Forum will feature:

- **Toolbox presentation** – the latest and greatest in Toolbox products
- **TAFE Virtual Campus** update – changes and enhancements





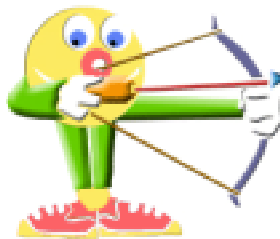
- Demonstration on the **latest technical equipment and softwares** and their uses in the educational environment, including:

- Tablet technology
- Interactive white boards
- Wireless equipment
- Smart Phones (if available)
- Instant Messaging



Showcase – hosted by Glenda McPherson

- Introduction to the



2004 Flexible Learning Games

- and of course, substantial networking opportunities.





Lessons Learnt

As suggested in the introduction, TAFE Institutes hold a very privileged position. As such, we have an obligation to share our knowledge and resources to benefit those communities we are members of. With one regional forum behind us, and the planning for the second underway, the following lessons can be shared.

Make it accessible

One of the biggest challenges for staff from these Centres is finding the time to attend. Their hours are often part time and the opportunity to find backfill is extremely restricted. By offering to cover the costs of their mileage to attend the Forum, we have been able to increase attendance. Whether in the end these funds are used for mileage or as part contribution to backfill salaries is unclear. What we do know is that their financial capacity is very restrictive and any support is appreciated.

Range of ICT Skills

Because of the part time nature of the workforce in the regional community centres, the ability to access ICT training may have been limited. As such, any workshops need to cater to this range and make no presumptions about pre-existing skills. If the Forum can also provide a chance to build skills, this should be taken also, but bearing in mind that you will have a wide range of starting points.

Time to Taste

If possible, the Forum should be not just a 'show and tell'. Where ever possible, time should be allocated to allow the participants 'time to taste' and play with the resources that are on display. Only with that hands on experience will they have the confidence to follow up. Our recommendation is that you provide access to a variety of facilities that include a computer room and discussion room to allow movement freely between both areas.

Stay in Touch

The chance to 'get together' in a physical sense is often irreplaceable; however, ongoing communication should be encouraged. South West TAFE provides a RURAL Net newsletter as a way of staying in touch. A sample newsletter has been included at the conclusion of this case study.

Because of the geographical dispersion of the members of the forum, it is difficult to communicate changes and provide regular feedback. The following website was created to support communications to the group beyond the Forum meetings and is maintained by South West TAFE

http://www.swtafe.vic.edu.au/study_at_swtafe/FlexibleLearningNetworks/index.asp





Organisational Profile



The Institute is the main TAFE provider for the south west region of Victoria. We offer high quality educational programs locally as well as on a state and national level with campuses at Hamilton and Portland.

The Institute endeavours to provide the widest possible range of learning opportunities for our clients. Our delivery strategy encompasses classroom, workplace based, online and off campus learning solutions designed to meet the needs of the learner and their learning environment. In addition to our own student population, the Institute endeavours to act as a feeder to smaller, community providers. This can include newsletter, professional development and workshops similar to the one documented in this case study.

Lyn Goodear – Manager, Flexible Learning Unit

Experience in developing and implementing flexible learning strategies, products and professional development. Highly developed research skills and delivery skills.

Loreto Dunn – Coordinator, RURAL Net Flexible Learning Network

Amanda Hennessy – Project Officer, Flexible Learning Unit

Experience in implementing flexible learning strategies and associated professional development.

Appendix A

Regional Forum Invitation – page 8

Appendix B

RURAL Net Newsletter - page 9

Flexible Learning Week Invitation Regional Forum 2004



Date: Wednesday 25th August, 2004

Time: 9:45 am—3:30 pm

Location: Lecture Theatre—F Block

South West Institute of TAFE



- 9:45 am Tea & Coffee
- 10:00 **Welcome** (Lyn Goodear and Loreto Dunn)
Outline of the day's events and Centre Updates
(Come ready to share a good news story with the group)
- 10:30 **TAFE frontiers Showcase** (Glenda McPherson)
- 11:45 Morning Tea
- 12:00 noon **Demonstration of the latest technical equipment and software** (Amanda Hennessy)
Instant Messaging/Online Chat
Wireless equipment
Tablet technology
Interactive white boards
- 1:15 pm Lunch
- 1:45 **Take part in the Flexible Learning Games** (Lyn Goodear)
This event will allow you to see just how much fun this type of activity can be.
Find out how you can run and request these Games for your organisation
- 2:15 **Plenary Session and Coffee** (Lyn Goodear)
TAFE VC update
- 2:30 **Toolboxes** (Lyn Goodear)
Explore the latest Toolboxes. News.– Toolbox sharing agreement for Regional Net members

Please RSVP by 6th August, 2004

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Name of organisation: _____

Number of staff attending:

Names of staff attending:



RURAL Net



RURAL Net Members

Old Courthouse
Community Centre

Southern Grampians
Adult Education

Colac ACE

Corangamite District
Adult Education

Port Fairy Community
House

Simpson & District
Community Centre

SEAL

Timboon P12

Good Shepherd
Lutheran College

WCC Multimedia
Centre

Glenelg Regional
Library

Workskills - Portland

Welcome to the Autumn Edition of RURAL Net

A big welcome to our newest member— Workskills Portland.



WorkSkills is a major provider of Adult and Community

Education in the Portland district. A Registered Training Organisation, WorkSkills delivers a wide range of general and accredited courses to learners.



ICT TRAINING

Well done to all those who completed OTTE accredited training for Flexible Learning Networks. Staff from Colac ACE, Casterton Community Centre, SEAL and Glenormiston completed this training. Positive feedback from participants advised that travel time and absence from organisations was well spent.



FLEXIBLE LEARNING WEEK

South West TAFE will be hosting a regional forum during flexible learning week. We are currently in the planning process and would appreciate your ideas. On the back of this newsletter is an expression of interest form, along with details of travel assistance, which we hope will make it easier for you to be part of the day. Our goal will be to condense as much hands on activity into the day, so that you walk away with a kit full of new information!



TOOLBOXES

Don't forget to check out the latest ANTA Toolboxes: www.flexiblelearning.net.au/toolbox/index.htm These resources can greatly ease the burden on resource preparation. Although a cost applies (ranging from \$200 to \$400), once your organisation makes the initial purchase, you can duplicate the resource to support as many of your learners as required.

Looking for Teacher Resources on the TAFE VC? The attached flyer will assist you.

