

# From Dream To Reality: Enriching Lives for 40 Years



A personal reflection by Patricia Carroll



**A dream doesn't become reality through magic;  
it takes sweat, determination and hard work.**

*Colin Powell*

# **From Dream To Reality: A Community Icon Is Born**

## **A Brief History Of SGSCC 1979 to 2018**

### **Introduction**

*Anyone who is fortunate enough to see their child reach the age of 40 is very grateful to see their child grow to mature adulthood. They feel a sense of relief in having assisted their child to survive the challenges, joys and excitement of growing up.*

*Hopefully they stand back and observe their child's march towards the gaining of wisdom and the achievement of their full potential, seeing them growing their networks and influence, making their contribution to society.*

*Those who were at the birth of what is now SGSCC know something of this sense of satisfaction, at the same time asking the inevitable questions, just like parents, of: where have the years gone, how could so many years have passed so quickly and how amazing is it that we have built such a unique endeavour together!*

## **Prehistory: Life Before St George & Sutherland Community College (SGSCC)**

SGSCC can trace its roots to the 1930's when a small number of fledgling Evening Colleges operated in the St George area, namely at Hurstville and later Kogarah High Schools. By coincidence Patricia Carroll's mother-in-law had learnt millinery and cooking in these classes as an adult student.

In 1957 evening classes commenced at Port Hacking High School in the Sutherland Shire and later at Engadine High School. At this time these organisations were run by the Education Department in NSW, utilising day school staff as administrators and High School accommodation as venues on a few evenings per week. They offered some leisure learning, primarily arts, crafts and cooking, some adult literacy and some high school qualifications for second chance learners who had experienced interruption to their school education.

### **Our SGSCC Beginnings**

In 1979 Patricia Carroll, not long returned to Sydney with her young family from a three year stint living in Canberra, responded to a Sydney Morning Herald advertisement for "ideas for new courses". Invited to attend an interview with Geoff Scott of TAFE Outreach and as a parent of a young child with Down Syndrome, Patricia described to Geoff her dream. This dream had come to her as she sat at her kitchen table pondering how she could find meaning from this special child coming to her and her family.

Patricia had "moth-balled" a degree and Dip Ed which had included major studies in Special Education whilst she devoted herself to her family of three, then ultimately five children. She and her husband had both had the opportunity and benefit of University education. What opportunities would exist post school for her daughter became a pre-occupation for Patricia. She sought out conferences and did research on what was happening for further, post- school education for People with a Disability. Nothing existed! The idea that this could be something she could do, or could contribute to; that this could be how she might find meaning from an otherwise tough hand from fate, took hold of her. Geoff, moved by Patricia's story, encouraged her warmly. He immediately then referred Patricia on to Ken Gibbon, Senior Education Officer for the NSW Board of Adult Education, BAE, a statutory body of the Department of Education. Ken also encouraged and supported Patricia in her dream for a College where People with a Disability could access further post- school education.

Door after door began to open to this idea as Patricia grew her networks with local area Department of Health personnel and other service staff assisting People with

a Disability whom she met whilst pursuing pre-school therapy for her child. One contact led to another and Patricia soon met the vibrant and visionary George Kendall, then President of the Board of Civic Industries, a supported employer of People with a Disability. A small grant was given to Patricia by the Board of Civic Industries to enable the set-up of an Incorporated Association, named the Kringen Association Inc. "Kringen" is an Aboriginal word meaning growth.

Patricia then applied for and was given a grant from the NSW Board of Adult Education, to bolster the donation from Civic to commence her work. The aim of her program was to encourage People with a Disability to maintain their foundation skills of reading, writing and numeracy and to advance their preparation for the workforce and for independent adult life in the community.

In September 1979 fourteen adult students with a disability came together as the first group of Kringen students, ranging from ages 18 to 40. Courses offered by a small team of teachers assisting Patricia covered Everyday Science, Consumer Education, Current Affairs, Public Speaking, Citizenship Skills, Personal Grooming, Literacy, Money Management and Personal Budgeting, Cooking and Life Skills. The first venue for the courses was the Caringbah High School, utilised in the evening care of the generosity of the Education Department, who were also supportive of the new program.

In these early days further assistance was given by Pat Manser from the BAE who opened doors to local politicians, like Frank Walker, then Member for the Georges River, a greatly respected social reformer. Frank later became State Attorney General in the Wran government and, later, Federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister in the Keating government. Frank eagerly listened and helped to promote Patricia's ideas for further education/ post school services for PWD in political circles.

Much valued personal support came from Praetoria Conigrave, the Social Worker attached to the Bexley Therapy Centre, where Erin, Patricia's daughter with a disability, was receiving pre-school therapy. Praetoria volunteered to care for Patricia's then three children on Kringen course delivery nights whilst Patricia began her program for People with a Disability. Librarians from the Hurstville library introduced Patricia to enthusiastic tutors and provided resources to assist with the program.

After a short time operating at the Caringbah High School, Patricia was invited by TAFE Principal, Lucy Hurtz, to move her growing classes to Gynea TAFE so that the students with a disability could enjoy their courses along with other adults. Moral support was also given to Patricia by TAFE Bankstown Outreach Co-ordinator, Norma Hayman.

Funding had to be sought each year from the NSW BAE to continue this increasingly valued program. When Graham Devlin replaced Lucy Hurtz as GyMEA TAFE Principal, Patricia was invited to join The GyMEA TAFE Board, then, later the Sydney TAFE Board. In appreciation of her work with People with a Disability Patricia was nominated by Graham and received a Rotary Pride of Workmanship Award. This support and recognition was much appreciated and advanced the cause of People with a Disability and secured, soon after, their inclusion in TAFE vocational courses.

## **Our Infancy**

In 1982 government decided to hand over the management of the then part- time Evening Colleges, which ran mostly hobby courses for the community, from central management by the Department of Education to community management. Prior to this, People with a Disability were not included in Evening College activities. Some literacy and numeracy courses had been run from time to time for adults with a disability at Bates Drive School and later at the Port Hacking High School prior to the Kringen courses.

Patricia, still running the Kringen classes at GyMEA TAFE, was encouraged to apply for an Evening College Principal position, was interviewed and appointed as Principal of the newly formed part- time Engadine Evening College Inc.

The Engadine Evening College was conducted at night at the Engadine High School. Soon after her appointment Patricia made an appointment to visit the school, to meet the Principal and to learn about the school facilities, resources and security issues. She was taken on a tour around the school. When she arrived at the Industrial Arts Department she was introduced to the day- staff member of the school who had assisted in the running of the Evening College under the previous Education Department regime. Unknown to Patricia, this man had unsuccessfully applied to take on the Evening College Principal's role under the new community regime. With a small crowd gathering as spectators, this person said the following to Patricia in a most aggressive manner:

"I can't believe a housewife has taken my job".

Patricia finished the tour with dignity. The rest is history. We can now celebrate that the world has evolved since the 1980's and that women now face a glass ceiling instead of a concrete one like Patricia had to face in her early career!

All administrative and financial systems were then put in place by Patricia who had received management training in her former life as an Executive with Arnotts Biscuits. The budget did not stretch to the set-up of an office so the administration for the new

College was conducted after face to face class times from Patricia's home with some part-time paid assistants recruited by Patricia. This ensured the secure opening and closing of the school and helped with face to face enrolments, which were taken in person utilising Engadine Community Centres. A Board was recruited by Patricia and appointed to assist in the governance of the College. Some infrastructural funding was received each year from the BAE. Meanwhile Kringen classes for People with a Disability continued at Gymea TAFE.

Numbers of enrolments at the Engadine Evening College grew from 550 in 1982 to 1530 in 1988 under Patricia's management. Courses were expanded to cover a wide variety of learning pitched for the whole community: Personal Development e.g. Philosophy, Psychology; Computer Studies; Adult Literacy; Microwave Cooking, as microwaves were coming into vogue in most kitchens for the first time in those years; short-term vocational courses, e.g. Typing, Bookkeeping, Train the Trainer, Small Business Management; Languages, e.g. Japanese, French; Leisure Skills, e.g. Yoga and Tai Chi. By this time the Training Guarantee program, whereby employers could receive tax concessions for the training of their staff, had commenced. This program created a growing pool of students and employers looking for quality vocational courses which the College was happy to provide to the Engadine Community, as well as to the many St George and Sutherland Shire residents who were happy to drive to Engadine.

During this time some daytime classes were also run in and around Engadine in community locations and church halls, also bringing to light many people, not in the workplace, who wanted stimulating activities to pursue during the day.

## **We Begin To Grow**

In 1988 the decision was made by the Department of Education/NSW BAE that all part-time Evening Colleges were to be regionalised under one full-time regional Principal, supported by a Community Board, to improve reach into the Community. Many cynics at the time believed there was a hidden agenda to save government money and that this would mean the demise of Adult Education, freeing up the Department to concentrate on the education of children. The result, instead, is a currently thriving and vibrant, "fourth sector"; a sector of education which has soared to great heights in NSW and other parts of Australia.

In 1988 Patricia was appointed after a competitive selection process as the first Principal of the newly named Sutherland Evening College. Nola Nutt, then Principal of the Bates Drive Special School, was a member of the three person selection panel and a member of the inaugural regional Board recruited by Patricia. So began a wonderful, supportive and creative partnership between Patricia and Nola and the synergy between the Board,



the Management of SGSCC and the Community which has ensured the dynamism and endurance of SGSCC to the present day.

As a part of this new position Patricia moved the Kringen courses for PWD from the Gymea TAFE to the Port Hacking High centre of the Evening College. Some funding was still being sourced on a small scale for these courses each year from BACE (the newly named Board of Adult and Community Education replaced the old BAE) under their Equity Funding. The College Board soon after made the decision to subsidise Disability courses from profits along with small fees to be charged to the students with a disability. This resulted in an increase in courses to meet the growing demand and improved the resourcing of the Kringen program. It proved to be a fortuitous decision with the growth, development and increasing demand for services to PWD over subsequent years. It also served to earmark SGSCC early in its history as a specialist in the provision of courses and services to PWD in an integrated setting. This integration of PWD continues to the present day and has assured SGSCC a successful and valued place in the new NDIS world.

Subsidy of Disability courses and activities by SGSCC continues today in some form but has been greatly assisted since the 1990's by a gradual increase in NSW Government funding, firstly in the form of Post School Options, Community Access, Transition to Work, later in Stronger Together, Active Aging and Life Choices funding programs.

As part of the regionalisation of the newly formed Sutherland Community College new general course campuses were opened in 1989 at Cronulla and Menai High Schools in addition to those already operating at Port Hacking and Engadine High. Demand for PWD courses continued to grow.

Demonstrating his commitment to Adult Education, Brian Naylor, who had been the part-time Principal of the Port Hacking Evening College, agreed to stay on as co-ordinator of the Port Hacking site and work with Patricia to make a success of the new entity. Great thanks must go to Brian for his generous support in these early days of the College.

Many humorous stories and memories exist about these early days of running the College and its infrastructure with minimum resources, which include: the "pen and whiteboard marker trade -in scheme": no new one until the used-up one was handed in; the naming of our course enrolment list from the "course master" to the "course mistress" because of the all-female staff at the time; the battle to achieve the purchase of the first College car which was only won after Patricia's husband withdrew Patricia's use of the family car and officially notified that taxis would need to be used for College errands thereafter:- a car was soon after approved for purchase by the College Board; staff family working bees to move us to often- changing premises and to remove cobwebs from decrepit sites; children of staff counting out and helping with distribution of marketing brochures in school holidays; staff using the backs of paper for College stationery to



minimise paper purchasing; the number of room petitions that came down, went up, came down again as the infrastructure grew and changed; the lock outs, the lock-ins, the scaling of walls as we came to terms with security issues.

These early years initiated the term “Eating College”. This was our team’s play on our early title of “Evening College”. This came about because in the early stages, in our small team, there were always birthdays to celebrate, small, and sometimes bigger, victories to mark, many colleagues and visitors who came to see what we were doing and to whom hospitality was shown. This culture of hospitality largely commenced because Patricia had come from a family who loved entertaining. She was educated by Brigidine nuns who embraced all excuses to show hospitality. This love of standing back to celebrate continues to ensure there is fun and laughter in our workplace today. As a staff member commented, when he had bought a cake to share on International Women’s Day, 2018: “we all spend a lot of time at work. Every workplace needs fun, laughter and celebration”.

In these early days many new College programs were named as we brainstormed together to find a catchy title for the latest tendered program. “Splash of English” was a favourite amongst our naming options and always drew laughter. It was originally used by us as the title for a very successful program which assisted Muslim women to improve their swimming, their English language skills and their access to the community. It raised laughs on many an occasion in the staff lunch room as we often used lunch breaks as we listed possible naming options for other prospective new language and literacy tenders.

This early struggle and the ability to find the humour in it all built the team work, loyalty and family-friendly ethos that have been the hallmark of SGSCC over the years.

## **We Receive A Proposal**

In 1989 the Principal of the then neighbouring St George Regional Evening College approached Patricia Carroll to consider an amalgamation with the Sutherland Regional Evening College, due to the financial difficulties being experienced by the St George College. She believed the synergy of the two areas could strengthen delivery and reach into the community and save costs. This Principal believed that St George was not viable trading alone. Patricia approached BAE for their stance on this proposal. Due to protests from the Principals of the Strathfield and Sydney Evening Colleges, a consultant was briefed to make recommendation as to the best way forward. After investigation, research and analysis the consultant recommended that the Sutherland Regional Evening College represented the best prospect for amalgamation. The competence of Patricia, the Principal of the Sutherland College, was deemed acceptable to effect the amalgamation and future management of the two merged Colleges. The amalgamation was completed to the satisfaction of both Boards in 1990. Patricia then also took on the role of Principal of the St George College.

## **Tragedy Strikes**

Soon afterwards, as daily management of the St George College was taken over, it became clear that a St George College Manager was embezzling course enrolment monies. Realising his actions were now known, and on the verge of his dismissal by Patricia, this person ended his life. This was a very dark period for all staff involved. Staff were assisted and counselled through this traumatic time. For many years afterwards whisky was kept on site in case of emergency.

Support was also given to the deceased staff member's family, one of whom continued to work casually for many years to assist the College. It emerged that the family had known of his gambling addiction for some years and were grateful for our support through such a harrowing period for them.

## **The Recovery**

After the recovery from this tragedy the new broom began to sweep through the St George College, removing all "cronies" who had been put in place. The program of courses was extended. The old St George College office was closed down on the premises of the Hurstville High School and moved to share the office then used by the Sutherland Evening College at the old Miranda Primary School next to Westfield Miranda.

The success and enhanced income promoted by the amalgamation saw an increase in Literacy courses on offer over the two regions. It also enabled the expansion of our Schoolage and English courses, the opening of two new commercial rental properties to allow growth in Spoken English and Schoolage courses at Butler Road Hurstville and Montgomery St Kogarah. Opportunities then increased for delivery of work-related courses under the Training Guarantee; also for day-time provision of general courses. Daytime courses had not been possible because of the lack of availability and sufficient budget to afford rental of purpose-built daytime training premises in the Sutherland area of the College. A new evening and weekend course centre was also set up at the Peakhurst High School in addition to those at Kogarah and Hurstville High Schools.

Our first Co-ordinator to oversee our Literacy, ESL and Disability activities was employed part-time in 1991 across the two regions, allowing growth and development of other major activities that have helped develop our now six business units.

## **We Move Again, Opportunity Knocks, Corporate Training Commences**

In 1991 the College moved its administrative office from the Miranda site to a vacant part of the Endeavour High School in Caringbah due to the growing needs of the Education Department. Feeling like gypsies on the move we soon felt the “knock of opportunity”. Here at the Endeavour High School there was an additional vacant room which allowed us to purchase our first training computers and set up daytime computer classes. This extra income enabled us to extend our Marketing face to face to local industry in both St George and in the Sutherland Shire.

A short-term contracted specialist accompanied Patricia on visits to large companies in the area and beyond in an attempt to extend our delivery of work-related courses. This was slow to get off the ground but furnished us with valuable insight into which direction to follow to build the vocational training business of the College. Many high profile companies, e.g. Toyota, SBS, Caltex, ANSTO, after these visits, began to enrol their employees in our advertised vocational courses. Some courses tailored to the specific needs of companies for computer skills and literacy commenced.

### **A Quote From Our First College Prospectus Of 1996**

“ The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) AT Lucas Heights in Sydney has very high powered, highly qualified and highly specialised technical, scientific and administrative staff. But some of their staff need help with their English language fluency and written communication skills to improve job performance in activities such as writing reports, giving presentations and taking part in seminars.

ANSTO had heard of the St George & Sutherland Community College, their local ACE provider, through their promotional brochures, and contacted the College for a solution to their problem. The result was an intensive, advanced level, language and communication course specifically designed to meet the particular characteristics and learning needs of the ANSTO staff”

Linda Housman, ANSTO's Acting Education Manager, made this comment:

*‘The college gave the needs of our staff excellent attention and were very diligent in the way they carried out the training. The college was very flexible and responsive as they were able to deliver the training on-site and during working hours. It was also pitched at the right level for our staff's particular needs. Their very competitive pricing was another big plus and we will certainly be using them again.’ ”*

## **Some Progress, Some Cutbacks. Change Is The Constant Challenge**

In 1992 our first full- time Literacy Co-ordinator was employed. Special Needs Funding from the BACE for the first time gave some surety to our Disability courses. However subsidy of courses needed to continue to meet growing demand. Demand for courses for unemployed people also increased at this time. Special funding was sourced through the BACE. However, cutbacks in infrastructural funding coming from BACE also commenced at this time.

## **We Find A Home**

In September 1992 we first became aware through the neighbouring Eastern Suburbs Evening College Principal, Peter O'Reilly, that the old Jannali Girls High School was vacant and that an offer might be made by us to occupy the premises as caretakers. This was immediately followed up by Patricia and negotiations commenced. This was an exciting prospect for overcoming our frustrations in relation to a lack of satisfactory facilities for the provision of day classes in the Sutherland Shire.

Negotiations were successful. We began to occupy the Jannali premises at the beginning of 1993 and commenced our classes in Jannali in Term One.

Around this time, the Student Transition Education Program, STEP, also commenced. STEP classes, which continue to the present day, were introduced to young People with a Disability still attending school in the senior years to encourage them (and their parents) to further and maintain their education and skills after leaving school. Classes included Computing, Office Skills, Career Awareness, Cooking and Self- Assertiveness. These programs commenced because children with a disability attending regular high schools were not given access in those times to computers. The College was again ensuring equal opportunity for young People with a Disability.

Finally to have a home for at least two years was a great joy and allowed fulfilment of the dreams of the staff involved. That year our corporate clients included ANSTO, Sydney Airport Catering and nursing homes.

Our delivery to unemployed people, including the LEAP, (Land and Environment Action Program) and the Mature Workers Program, increased thanks to our successful tendering for federal government Labour Market Programs funding.

The LEAP Program for young, unemployed people from dysfunctional and disadvantaged backgrounds was our first foray into Labour Market Programs. At our new Jannali site some wonderful work was done with these disadvantaged young



Front of house staff at Reception Entrance of Jannali Centre, Early 1990's. A home at last



Greenspace before the Bransgrove Building was constructed

people to give them life, literacy and horticultural skills to turn their lives around and make lasting improvements to the local environment, including restoration of mangrove areas around local bays.

We continued to operate out of our High School centres at night and in many of our other rented community daytime venues across our area at this time.

## **The 1990's: A Time Of Challenge and Growth**

1994 was a memorable year for the College: Sydney was surrounded by bushfires. In January 1994, whilst a guest at a wedding in the St George area, Patricia received the news that the College site at Jannali had “gone up in flames”. Devastated, two hours later, Patricia received a further phone call which confirmed that the College still stood, though the vacant bushland at the side of our buildings had burned to the ground as had the bush at the back of the College. Arriving at the scene of destruction the next morning Patricia noted the loss of many houses in the surrounds, one of which was owned by a staff member who later came to work for the College in 1997 and remains with us as a most valuable staff member today.

Miraculously our College itself had been saved from the fires.

Patricia was asked and readily agreed to house the fire relief effort for the Sutherland Shire at our Jannali site. So began our further embeddedness into our local community.

## **A Major Win For People With A Disability**

That same year 52 young People with a Disability commenced our first full-time courses, named Post School Options, fully funded by the State Government, along with all our other students at Jannali. This was a significant milestone in the College's history of provision to PWD. Federal funding was secured by the College and partly matched by the State Government and represented the first significant funding received for programs for school leavers with a disability. This was the result of successful lobbying by the community and parents of PWD. Patricia Carroll was a member of the original lobbying group who spear headed the campaign across the state and federally. She and her children, with many other families, demonstrated outside Parliament House Sydney to effect this massive equal opportunity breakthrough for People with a Disability to win the right to post school education and training.

A Grand Opening of these classes and College celebration was held, attended by community supporters and politicians to mark this milestone. We combined this with a belated celebration of our earlier milestone: our occupation of the Jannali premises.



Those members of staff still in attendance when the VIP's left the function, struck up the CD player and danced with joy to the tunes of Fleetwood Mac, a favourite band of the times. The College now catered to the learning needs of adults with a disability of all ages

## **We Have A Name Change**

The amalgamated College formally became known in 1994 as the St George and Sutherland Community College (SGSCC). The power of the word “community” had gained traction and was introduced into our name.

## **Vocational Education Grows In Stature**

In the early to mid 1990's Evening and Community Colleges were encouraged to become more active in workplace /vocational training and take up the challenge of creating a more qualified Australian workplace, especially in the areas of Train the Trainer and Computer skills, allowing tax deductions to employers who paid for training of their employees under the Training Guarantee.

Pressure soon came from government to establish quality systems for those organisations offering such courses. In answer the BACE, utilising external consultants, structured a purpose-built Quality System.

Under this system Patricia Carroll and then Assistant Principal, Bernadette Cavanagh trained as Quality Assessors. On invitation these staff members were involved in audit visits to examine and, if appropriate, deem compliant the systems of other colleges. In the process Patricia and Bernadette gained knowledge to improve our own systems.

In mid 1994 the newly established ANTA, (Australian National Training Authority) gave \$2M to be distributed to Community Colleges to assist them to commence the offering of accredited vocational training. Our College, receiving some of this funding employed our first VET Manager, introduced accredited Literacy and Spoken English, and Small Business and Management courses after going through a complex accreditation process through the then NSW Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board. This officially commenced our history as a Registered Training Organisation, RTO. Our activity in connection with the offering of high quality accredited courses continues today under the scrutiny and regular auditing of ASQA, the Australian Skills Quality Authority. Over the years we have offered courses for high profile businesses and government entities EG Ansett employees post takeover and staff redundancies given, Telstra, the Environmental Protection Authority, Caltex, SBS and numerous local businesses; for community businesses like Sylvanvale, Civic Industries, IDF; state and private school staff and individual students.



## **Our Home Becomes Permanent: We Win The Battle To Keep Our Home**

At the end of our caretaker term at the Old Jannali Girls' High School we were given notice to quit the premises to make way for town house development. Against all odds, including advice from the BACE and warnings from the Bureaucracy that we would not be successful, utilising Patricia's lobbying experience, we rallied the local community and beyond, local government and every member of both houses of State Parliament. We utilised form letters and petitions signed by the families of our growing contingent of PWD utilising our day programs at Jannali and by all of our students across the Sutherland Shire and St George to secure our tenure, a lease for our Jannali home and also for the building of a loop road to improve the safety of our students.

After some delay, a five year Licence Agreement, plus option, to occupy the Jannali premises and the building of the loop road were achieved that year.

Jan Smith the then Director of BACE described SGSCC in 1994 as "A class act".

## **Other Highlights of The 1990's**

### **1995**

Our in-house bulletin, The Wrap was first distributed. In the days before email this was our way to stay in touch with our staff at our numerous course venues.

Patricia becomes the first female President of NSW Evening and Community Colleges Principals' Association and prepares the written evidence to improve the salaries of Evening and Community College Principals. This was a massive undertaking. The volumes of evidence now takes up a shelf in Patricia's office. Whilst the Teachers' Federation supported an alignment to the salary received by Primary School Principals it would not support the evidence that Evening and Community College Principals should be classed as general managers. This led to a mass withdrawal from the Teachers' Federation of Patricia and many other Evening and Community College Principals and a movement to individual contracts and Certified, and later, Enterprise Agreements for all staff in the sector until the introduction of Modern Awards in early 2010.

SGSCC invests with other Community Colleges in the Rydal Education Centre near Lithgow to extend opportunities for residential courses and professional development. Some valuable professional development was enjoyed by our staff there, including Train the Trainer residential courses. Alas, this was later sold off to private business interests because of the costs of upkeep.

Our **Scholarship Scheme** commences. This is funded by SGSCC and requires third-party nomination for awarding of scholarships to disadvantaged people. It continues to exist and has opened up learning and opportunities to change the lives of many people, including those recovering from significant mental or physical illness, who wish to restart their learning and entry back into society.

## **1996**

Our first SGSCC Prospectus is written showcasing our endeavours to business, government and the community

Our first Professional in-house accountant is employed, vastly improving all our financial systems and controls.

## **1997**

We employ our first Resources/Library/Quality Manager. With the commencement of the Internet, the purchasing of Text Books and Manuals for many classes and the advent of YouTube this staff member, who is still with us, has taken on project management roles over the years in our Leisure and now Disability Departments. She maintains a large involvement in whole of College planning, resources management, quality, tendering and Disability management and recruitment.

We commence our annual participation in the Sutherland to Surf Fun Run and consolidate our emphasis on a happy, a healthy and family- friendly workplace.

Dramatically moving from our comfort zone, we are charged with the rapid organising and production of an Adult Learners' Week Cable TV Program, showcasing activities of Community Colleges, with Patricia as anchor woman. Guest spots from our own tutors and staff and those from other Community Colleges were a feature. Whilst a wonderful experience enjoyed by all pulling together, none of those involved were keen "to give up their day jobs" to follow media careers full time.

School- holiday courses for school children commenced. This continues today with Computer Coding school holiday classes and current plans to grow School Holiday Programs to meet growing community needs.

Our first Business Development Manager was employed, allowing us to improve and grow our marketing and numbers of vocational students studying with us. Real time online enrolment commences. This has greatly grown in popularity over the years and currently stands at around 50% of our total enrolments.

We occupy Training premises in Montgomery St Kogarah to house vocational courses for the first time in the St George region.

We invent our unique management Structure: In 1997 we receive funding from the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) to undergo, as a Management Team, training under the Management Enhancement Team Approach. This involved undertaking a module from the MBA (Master of Business Administration) together as a team.

As part of this process we begin to look at succession planning to ensure the continuing existence of the College. Though we had trialled the system of having an Assistant Principal in place to cover Patricia's absences, after a number of years we found that inevitably these people moved on to senior roles outside the College.

After extensive reflection and reading on the subject Patricia put in place a flat structure of managers and department heads, with a rotating Executive Advisor position shared on a two- monthly basis amongst these executives. This has been a very successful strategy which ensures a pool of capable persons acquiring regular senior management experience in Patricia's absences. This system remains in place today.

## **1998**

By 1998 enrolments had grown to over 20000 per year. Systems were put in place to streamline enrolment, payroll and financial reporting.

Our first Parent Advisory Committee for our disability services commences. It still exists today, with new faces joining each year.

Though welcomed in all our classes and given pension discounts, where applicable, Seniors discounted classes commence. Highly stimulating classes in areas like health, film appreciation, psychology and gentle exercise, playing the harmonica, bonsai and much more continue to the present day on Tuesday mornings each week during term.

The importance of these classes in overcoming social isolation of older persons was highlighted to Patricia by one lady who told of her loneliness, having come from another area of New South Wales to live with her extended family in the Sutherland Shire. She had no friends locally. Through attending our Seniors Classes she made a whole new group of friends and soon felt part of our community.

Our first SGSCC Website is constructed to profile all our endeavours.

The first of our Certified Agreements with staff was registered. These have been renewed over the years and changed to Enterprise Agreements with the Fair work legislation of 2009. These agreements have ensured harmony in SGSCC's Industrial Relations over the years and a stable and loyal and ever improving and developing workforce.

Patricia appears with Kostya Tsyzy, world champion boxer, in September on the Channel Nine Wide World of Sport. Patricia had approached Kostya on behalf of her co- members of the Adult Learners' Week organising committee for him to become the face of Adult Learners Week, launched that year in NSW. Kostya and his family had been students of SGSCC. He had graciously agreed, unlike other celebrities approached by other committee members to accept the small fee offered for the promotion.

This made news in the sporting world. Patricia received surprised phone calls that day from her two ex-Rugby Union and Rugby League playing brothers, wondering how their non-sporty, "academic" sister managed to appear with Kostya on the Channel 9 Wide World of Sports where they had failed!

## Right hook, right book

By JENNY LOCKHART

BOXING legend Kostya Tsyzy donned a new glove this week when he struck out in support of Adult Learners Week, running to September 4.

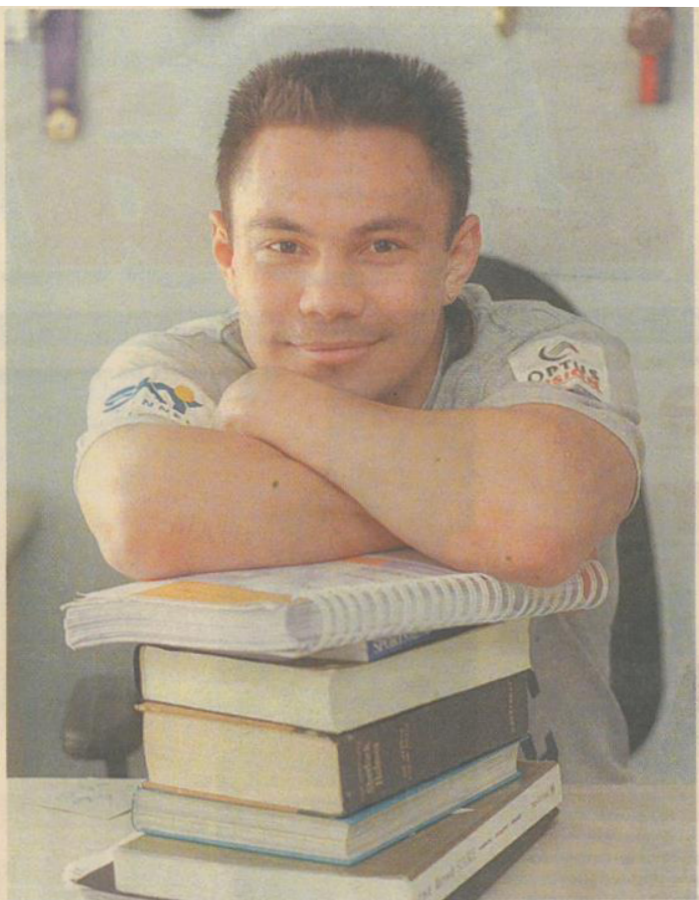
Tsyzy said it was important immigrants to Australia learnt the Australian language and culture so they would feel at home in the country.

He is an avid supporter of adult education and is responsible for enrolling many Russian immigrants into Adult and Community Education programs.

The programs help immigrants learn the English language, the Australian way of life and meeting friends in their local neighbourhood.

When Mr Tsyzy migrated to Australia 6½ years ago he immediately enrolled in an adult education course.

"When I first arrived in Australia I spent six months at college learning the English language



and I have continued to encourage other immigrants to do the same," Tsyzy said.

"I think it is very important for immigrants to learn the Australian culture and

English language if they are to live in the country and feel at home in it."

Mr Tsyzy's wife, Natasha, is a pupil of the St George and Sutherland Community College where the renowned

boxer also encourages his fellow Russians to attend.

Adult Learners Week is a national celebration of the continuation of adult education.

## **Opportunity Knocks Again and Costs SGSCC**

In 1998 SGSCC was approached by a large private training company, ACL, to join them in a consortium to tender in the first competitive round of the AMEP, the Adult Migrant English Program. Till this date the AMEP had been solely delivered by the AMES, Adult Migrant English Service, a statutory body of the NSW Education Department. To our delight, our consortium won the tender across South Western Sydney.

This opportunity came about through networks established by the then Literacy Manager, Ruth Fyfe and Patricia Carroll. Though given a brief by the consortium to offer the program at centres at Hurstville and Kogarah and later, Rockdale, and handed the difficult task of setting up small community centres and classes dotted throughout the South Western region, a great success was made of the contract by SGSCC.

Observing the success SGSCC had made of the tender in our area and wanting to retain the area for their shareholders our consortium partner did not invite us back into their next consortium and tender round, scheduled to commence in 2003. Patricia and Ruth were invited to attend a meeting with an unspecified agenda in the city to be given this terrible information face to face, late on a Friday afternoon, which, alas, is often the preferred timing of many uncaring employers for dismissal of staff members.

In true “Eating College” style, shocked and devastated, Patricia and Ruth treated themselves to a ritzy dinner at the Sheraton, and with a glass of wine for Patricia and a soft drink for Ruth, a teetotaler, toasted the end of the AMEP partnership and the great unknown future. They then scheduled a strategic planning day for early on the coming Monday morning.

On the Monday morning, as they emerged re-vitalised from this planning meeting, with new plans to commence the training of International students, Patricia was asked to return a call to the Adult Migrant English Service (AMES). Bad, or good news, as it later seemed, had travelled fast about our “divorce” from the previous partnership. On returning this call Patricia received an invitation for our College to join the AMES, Adult Migrant English Service, in a new AMEP tender consortium. Again, as a member of our new AMES consortium we managed to win back the area. Another 8 years of happy and successful AMEP provision followed.

However, even though SGSCC had won a battle against the Community Colleges Australia Association to retain a full partnership in the AMES consortium, our consortium was defeated in the next 2011 AMEP tender round by the ACL consortium. The changing fortunes experienced by those who pursue government funding! After



the initial growth period, at the peak of our performance, each year of the AMEP program over 700 migrants were trained in English language and assisted in their settlement into our community by SGSCC. Over \$3M of revenue was brought in to the College each year by this program.

Innovative programs, like our English on Tour, which combined our classes in English with excursions to places like the Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Sutherland Highlands, the Illawarra and Palm Beach, served to enliven the classroom experience and immerse students into intensive English practice during the AMEP years. Other important off-shoots of the AMEP were the State Emergency Service auspiced Volunteer Training for Migrants and the commencement of the Skilled Migrant Mentoring Program which prepared highly trained migrants for the quirks of the Australian workplace. The latter course morphed into the Skilled Migrant Mentoring Program which SGSCC has been funded by the State government to offer each year since the loss of the AMEP.

A constructive partnership with CASS, the Chinese Australian Services Society, was also formed in the AMEP days and has surfaced again since 2016 with SGSCC being asked to provide courses in Training and Assessment on a regular basis for their community services staff.

A touching story about the value to students of SGSCC's AMEP delivery days is told by Jo Fitzpatrick, one of our long-term gifted and creative ex- AMEP and Community Service Obligations (CSO) tutors, who is now retired.

“One of our AMEP students at our Jannali campus was a newly arrived migrant from Lebanon who had come as a new bride following an arranged marriage. She told us she was experiencing homesickness and loneliness, especially on the weekends when she was not studying English in our AMEP classes at our Jannali campus.

She told us that on the weekends she would get her husband to drive her past our Jannali premises because she felt she “really belonged there”.

Six years of great challenge to survive and grow again post the AMEP delivery years ensued whilst we paid out a large number of redundancies and unexpected legal costs. This period saw the end to the careers of the wonderful Kay Patterson and Sandra Cole, our highly valued and, in Kay's case, long-serving front office staff who were amongst the many staff who took redundancies. These two ladies brought humour and style and brightened our days for many years as they ran our front office.

Re-structuring and re-inventing to replace the almost 35% of revenue lost with the withdrawal of the AMEP contract was difficult and vexing for SGSCC. A vow to

commit further to diversifying the activities of the College and to moving to become independent of government funding became the mantras of the College thereafter.

To our great delight, whilst we were going through the challenges of the post- AMEP era we experienced an unanticipated great growth in our Disability Services which continues today.

### **1999: We Make Our Olympics Bid**

In 1999 Patricia and the Parramatta Community College Principal, Peter Poulson, mounted a response on behalf of all Sydney based Community Colleges to a tender to train Volunteers for the Sydney 2000 Olympics. This was an amazing professional exercise for Patricia, saw work delivered under great pressure around the clock, included a presentation to the Olympic Committee for which Patricia soldiered on, dealing with the flu. Alas this was trumped by the TAFE bid.

Tragically, the Parramatta Principal, Peter Poulson a greatly talented and admired colleague was killed soon after in 2003. This was a great loss to our sector of education.

### **We Grow In Sophistication: Improvements To Our Governance And Offerings**

Our strategy to improve the engagement and knowledge of our SGSCC Board by introducing Portfolios begins. Under this system Board members choose an area of College business to engage more closely with the Manager of the department or business unit to grow their knowledge of the work and current issues of the College. Areas for Portfolio activity have included Disability, English and Schoolage activities, International Business, VET, Leisure, Computers and IT, Marketing, Finance, Planning and Youth activities.

Our Portfolio engagement of Board members continues to the present day

Our first Jannali Cafeteria and crèche open, improving services to students.

### **We Score Points In Heaven**

In the year 2000 we took up part-time residence for some of our classes in the newly established Georges River High School. This was our reward for successfully lobbying the community, at the request of Dr Alan Loughlin, then Education Department Assistant Director General. By means of a letter campaign and community petitions at the eleventh hour, we assisted the Department to keep the then newly vacated University of NSW Campus at Oatley in the hands of the Department for the use of school education. There



was a growing need to build extra schools to house the expanding St George population. The vote for the Education Department to retain the premises for school education was carried in state parliament by a one vote majority thanks to our lobbying efforts!

Whilst our usage of the newly developed Departmental school was short- lived because of demand from local students, this successful lobbying has assisted our tenure at our Jannali premises when the “chips were down” at a few junctures over the years.

## **The New Millennium**

### **Water Shed Years And Challenges To Leisure Learning**

Other Challenges to the growth experienced in the earlier days of SGSCC occurred early in the 2000's.

### **The GST is Introduced: A Blow To Life-Long Learning**

Since the introduction of the GST in the year 2000 Leisure enrolments have suffered a further downturn. Price rises, with the imposition of the GST to leisure courses, meant that taking part in leisure programs became unaffordable for many people. This especially affected those who needed these courses the most. Before this time many people who lacked the confidence to return to learning had found empowerment after successfully undertaking leisure learning with SGSCC. They then took the pathway into vocational training with us or other organisations and commenced more prosperous and rewarding employment or university studies. Many women regained the confidence through leisure learning and the growth of their friendships and networks to leave abusive relationships, to pursue further education and training, new lives of dignity, and financial and social independence.

Leisure programs were dealt another major blow in 2005. Government training policy dramatically shifted from supporting Community Colleges with some upfront infrastructural funding and some funding to assist leisure programs to a policy to fund only vocational courses and a small amount of literacy or special needs/disability – related, training. Disparaging commentary came from then Labor Ministers like Andrew Refshauge, who coined the term “Cappuccino Courses,” that ultimately effected this change in spite of our attempts to lobby against these changes.

The notion of the importance of Lifelong Learning, for such a long period the policy of governments of all persuasions, was thereafter appropriated by governments to encourage workplace training and the economic development agenda. The education of the whole person was conveniently abandoned. This funding withdrawal by government, with little notice, forced the most painful decision to make the positions

of seven highly valued SGSCC staff members redundant, and an impost of \$150K needed to be paid in compensation to these staff members from SGSCC funds, again with no assistance from government.

To this day the criticism of government continues for its failure to recognise the importance of giving life-long, subsidised adult learning opportunities to its citizens: opportunities which promote mental health; which address the major problem of loneliness in our society with the growing number of single person households; opportunities to promote the arts and cultural pursuits and build social capital.

As a result of this loss of funding Community Colleges no longer receive infrastructural funding and have had to run Leisure classes at full fee-recovery cost to students. This puts these learning activities beyond the budget of many individuals and families in a time when discretionary spending is reduced by high mortgage and living costs.

Also responsible for our current smaller numbers in Leisure courses and activities is competition from growing trends to “eat out” and the proliferation of online and YouTube products to meet cultural and do-it yourself needs.

In spite of all the above and, as Shakespeare’s Hamlet would describe it,” the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,” SGSCC has remained committed to a Leisure/ Cultural learning program which, alas, must pay its way. Unlike some other Community Colleges SGSCC has maintained its commitment to supporting our Leisure courses and the contribution they make to our community. We face the constant challenge of rising costs of tutor salaries and running costs. Yet somehow we gratefully maintain the support of a solid base of “old” and new students joining these programs. All involved in SGSCC gain great satisfaction from seeing our students acquire new interests, hobbies, talents and friendships, not to mention improved fitness and health from our wide variety of Leisure courses.

SGSCC continues, through its Scholarship Program, mentioned above, to give some places in its Leisure courses free of charge to disadvantaged persons. People recovering from mental and physical health challenges are the major recipients of SGSCC scholarships.

We hold out the hope that there will be a resurgence in enrolments in the Leisure area once the Baby Boomer retirees wind back their travels and seek enjoyable and stimulating activities locally again with their neighbours.

## **New Millennium Highlights**

In the year 2000 we win our battle to improve safety at our Jannali site with the help of state and local politicians. Education Minister Refshauge makes the decision to fund a further loop road to improve access to the tune of \$100K at our site.

We commence our Jannali site Community Garden with a grant from the Sutherland Shire Council in the year 2001. This is a wonderful resource for People with a Disability with its raised gardens, allowing people in wheelchairs from our own and other services to enjoy tending its flowers and produce. We purchase our first chooks, giving them names like Tandoori, Kiev etc. Their eggs achieve prizewinning results at the Sydney Royal Easter Show for cakes made with the eggs by the then marketing staff member, Diane Ritchie. In 2003 we win the Sutherland Shire Council Garden Competition for “Best Garden Maintained by Volunteers”

When our chooks and rabbits are stolen from our Garden in 2010, a call to Radio’s Alan Jones and the resulting community interest jam 2UE’s phone lines with offers to assist us. This brings about the return of some of our chooks and rabbits by a family who found them abandoned in the middle of a busy roundabout in Oyster Bay. Donation of funds and some additional chooks were also received.

Alas, in recent times, 2018, a very determined fox eliminated all but one. This was a most upsetting occasion for all involved in Jannali.

We have named our survivor chook, “Lucky”. He will soon be returned from the care of a staff member’s family once the fox-proofing of the garden and the fox eradication, commenced on our behalf by the Sutherland Shire Council, are completed.

Patricia is nominated and is a Finalist in the 2000 Telstra Businesswoman of the year Awards in a record year of nominations for her work in building SGSCC.

In 2000 our T Ballers with a Disability and our post-school programs for People with a Disability are featured in a 7.30 Report on the ABC.

We commence running OH&S courses for schools. This later extends to hosting work experience school students and career awareness courses on an on-going basis. Our work with schools continues up to the present day with our current teaching of computer coding classes in schools.

After many years on the NSW Evening and Community Colleges peak body Board, including as Vice-President, Patricia in 2000 becomes a Board member of the NSW ACE Council which amalgamated three former peak bodies representing Adult



Arabic Dance Classes





Students getting to grips with basic chords

Education providers. From 2001-2004, as President, she leads the difficult process of changing the name of this body to Community Colleges NSW and of branding the organisation, utilising the creative energy of external consultants and focus groups of students and community members from around NSW. This branding change, initially resisted by members, is ultimately accepted and adopted by all members and is still utilised as Community Colleges Australia branding after members from other states asked to come on board under the Community Colleges umbrella.

## **We Play On The Global Stage: We Welcome The World. Asia Calls**

In 2001 SGSCC hosts a visit from a delegation of the Singapore government and bureaucracy, known as Singapore Learning, seeking insights from our College to assist them in promoting life-long learning to those citizens of Singapore who had not been “streamed” from their earliest school days into a university education pathway. They were very impressed, especially by our programs for People with a Disability. Unlike our own governments who were deserting and denying the importance of encouraging adult learning in all forms in favour of a concentration on education and training for employment, they were coming to the realisation that they needed to create life-long learners if they were to bring all Singapore citizens to the realisation of their full potential. For their growing economy and to maintain an active and innovative workforce, not just a supply of university graduates, they could see the need for further post- school learning.

2004 saw the official launch of the International division of SGSCC, named ABLE College, whose major offering was spoken and practical English classes combined with travel and lifestyle experiences. We were very grateful for the assistance given to us from the Sutherland Shire Tourism Division and Austrade to form co-operative arrangements with local tour and leisure experience providers. Participants included teachers from Guandong and Xichuan Provinces, a touring group from Zhengzhou and a youth group from Guangzhou.

ABLE continued as a trading name for SGSCC until April 2018.

Several delegations and small groups involved in Study Tours for academics and also for groups of children visited SGSCC in the early to mid 2000's from varying parts of China and Russia, eager to implement our programs and learning strategies.

We were honoured by a visit from the Chief Minister of Malacca, Malaysia in 2007. He was keen to learn what we at SGSCC were doing in vocational training in that year.

This work for SGSCC culminated in a visit in 2012, at the invitation of the Chinese government and the University of Chengdu, to visit Guangzhou and Chengdu. Our delegation of three, Patricia Carroll, Ian Tritton and Lucy Liu is treated like royalty, transported and entertained and showered with gifts which now hold pride of place at our Jannali HQ. An MOU was signed at a ceremony at the University between SGSCC and the University of Chengdu to encourage ongoing co-operation.

The President of the Chengdu University, Mr Zhou, through translators, in his welcoming speech to our delegation and in the presence of the assembled senior academic staff of the University told Patricia she was a “very excellent woman” for “being inspired by the birth of her child with a disability to found an educational institution that brought learning to disadvantaged people”.

Patricia was very touched by this acknowledgement.

China, like Singapore, still has a sole preoccupation with university education. It may be some time before vocational education rises to prominence in China, perhaps as aged care reaches a crisis point and working families need more children's and disability services.

As a spin off from this adventure in 2013 short videos were produced by SGSCC staff at the request of a Shanghai based Chinese company for use as resources to train staff working in aged care in China. Since 2013 our services to China have trailed off, in keeping with our growing other domestic and international activities, but appear to be on the rise again in 2018 with a visit to SGSCC from a large delegation of educators from Wenzhou in August.

## **Oxford University Beckons**

An invitation for Patricia to join the Oxford University Round Table was taken up in 2001. This provided valuable networking with American and Canadian Community College CEO's and resulted in the preparation and delivery by Patricia of a paper on The Role of the Community College in Economic Development. This was chosen as the opening paper of the conference and is still used as a valuable resource today.

At one of the formal dinners at Oxford, because of her degree in Latin, Patricia was asked to say grace in Latin for those assembled. This was a very high point of Patricia's career.



## **The Second Decade Of The Millennium Upgrades And Additions To Jannali**

One of the most exciting opportunities that have enhanced the work of SGSCC came in 2009 around the time of the Global Financial Crisis, the GFC, and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's extensive school and Vocational Education and Training enhancement building program. This program was very "lengthily" known as the Teaching and Learning Capital Fund, (TLCF), Investing in Community Education and Training, (ICET). SGSCC successfully turned around an application in record time for this funding. A grant was won under this program, to add a building to the front section of the Jannali property to provide an environmentally sound and energy efficient building, encompassing a large meeting room which could be easily converted into two classrooms.

In addition, the building was to incorporate a clinical area for accredited training for aged care and disability staff and included a therapeutic indoor spa, and a kitchen. The building was also to be equipped with the latest IT and audio/visual equipment, a toilet block and included beautification of the building surrounds. The downside of this exciting prospect was that we had to demonstrate a current lease on the Jannali property and gain permission to build the proposed new building from the NSW Education Department. Whilst we had occupied the Jannali site under a Licence Agreement from 1997 to 2001, in spite of our requests, no renewal of the Licence had been offered.

In spite of feedback that getting an answer in a three- week turn-around from the Education Department on both the requests for a Lease and permission to build would be "Mission Impossible" we forged ahead. Every member of both houses of the NSW Parliament were again contacted by Patricia on behalf of the SGSCC Board to put "polite pressure" on the Education Department.

Thankfully our lobbying efforts won the day. After fifteen years of tenuous occupation of Jannali our first formal lease plus option and permission to build were granted. In 2010 our beautiful, state of the art, new building was officially opened with an Indigenous Smoking Ceremony, in keeping with the importance of the Jannali site to local Indigenous people. A large gathering of local prominent persons, colleagues from neighbouring colleges and politicians attended this great event for SGSCC.

The building was called the Bransgrove Building in honour of two long serving original College Volunteers, Judy and Arthur Bransgrove who later became staff and Board members of SGSCC. This naming serves to remind us all about the importance of volunteers in the challenging and difficult early days of the College and the ongoing importance of our community roots. The new building has been a wonderful asset

for education and training, for the housing of our disability services, has hosted our AGM's and Award Nights, visits from the Minister of Education, delegations from the Chengdu University, some enjoyable Melbourne Cup celebrations and a Reunion of ex Jannali Girls High School students.

Thanks go to Don and Dick Sinclair for the project management and design of the Building. Like most big projects the logistics of managing the new building without interruption to our programs were huge. We even had to get a generator on site whilst we repaired a physical blow/ interruption to our electricity supply made inadvertently by our building contractors. Our neighbours and students were most patient with our traffic detours over this disruptive but exciting period.

## **The Recent Past: Our Mettle Is Tested: 2011 to 2017**

There are few individuals, organisations or businesses whose lives are not challenging at some point. For SGSCC those difficult, trying years were from 2011 to 2017.

As mentioned above, after the loss of the twelve year delivery of the AMEP in July 2011, SGSCC was faced with large redundancy and legal battles and bills. Ongoing liability for expensive leasing of accommodation where the AMEP program had been run was also a large drain on SGSCC. We stood at the crossroads: faced on the one hand with severely pruning back our activities or using the funds saved in the successful AMEP days to take calculated risks to pursue new business and activities. Though more conventional wisdom might have been to shrink our activities and infrastructure and to try to grow again, our courageous Board and staff "took the road less travelled" and decided to "back ourselves" and invest in the future.

Fortunately, at this time we experienced growth in our Disability endeavours as our reputation as a provider of post- school programs for PWD also grew. However the growth of our fee for service English and Schoolage programs did not pay the large ongoing rent. Our retention of some of our ex AMEP staff to market and grow an ELICOS Program did not prove successful.

By 2016 we finally extricated ourselves from our expensive rental property at Hurstville. We then consolidated our St George activities to a more affordable rental property and brought our now growing, International CRICOS program, in which we had heavily invested in the start-up period, back to our Jannali headquarters. Alas, we lost some momentum in this growth due to new International Student Visa rules and slowing of referrals as a consequence. These problems have now been solved and growth continues. This period challenged us further with significant cut-backs to our State government VET funding and the commencement of a limited, impossible to deliver contract

under the new State Smart and Skilled funding. This new funding took no heed of our vast former VET provision and confined us to offering a small number of Foundations Skills programs only. Difficulties rolling through an improved wider- delivery contract the following year were also encountered. These challenges were not assisted by the loss of two new Finance managers, in quick session, replacing a long-term, valued staff member. The loss also of a newly appointed Fundraising Manager in this same period added to challenges.

The expense and time involved with a record number of audits attached to setting up new SGSCC enterprises, funding changes and clarifications to property usage also incurred much angst in this period. Our monetary resources also needed to stretch at this time to implement wide-ranging systems changes which included our enrolment and financial systems changes and the purchasing of expensive software to ready ourselves for the coming NDIS world, which commenced for us in July 2017.

We somehow managed to survive this period due largely to austerity measures and pulling together as Board and staff. All audits were passed with flying colours. All funding bodies and ASQA have acknowledged SGSCC as a best practice organisation in their audits. Our bank balance began to climb again after six years in a row of deficits!!! The commencement of the NDIS, whilst still challenging in the extreme, has seen us retain our clients, welcome new ones, build new business and create a waiting list of clients ready to join our NDIS programs.

## **Our Branding And Marketing Over The Years: How Have We Communicated Who We Are and What We Do?**

The development of our logo and branding parallels the history of SGSCC and the changes it has experienced over its existence. “Learning and Growing” has been the major theme of our Marketing over the years because that is what we believe learning does for people: assists them in their growth and development.

This concept was first represented by the image of a Moreton Bay Fig Tree of generous proportions. It morphed in the 1990’s into a garland surrounding an obelisk, denoting the power, the success achieved and growth through education and learning. In 2009, with now six distinctive business units operating, we developed the new branding, with a different coloured leaf to represent each of our business units: Leisure, WorkSkills, Disability, International, Schoolage and English. This represents the colour, energy and diversity of SGSCC and has assured our marketing is eye-catching and prominent. This year also saw our change to referring officially to the College as” SGSCC”. This branding has remained relevant and is still in use.

Many staff hours have gone into marketing and representing SGSCC at myriad events. Apart from the events organised by SGSCC which include awards nights, Adult Learners' Week celebrations and fairs we have been regulars at the Cronulla Spring Fair, Brighton Markets, Oatley Festival, Migrant Information Days, Career and Post School Training expo events all around Sydney.

Our foray into the world of online marketing commenced in the late 1990's with our first Web Site. In 2010, with Kira Klein appointed as our first E Marketing Manager, we commenced an upgrade of our web Site and began Facebook promotions. We are also now enthusiastic e-marketers through a professionally built website, utilising our colourful branding, which is now mobile enhanced and has Smart Chat facilities inbuilt. Facebook, targeted email campaigns, utilising Google Analytics also contribute to our current marketing efforts. Most of our Marketing resources are designed in-house through our "switched on" Marketing and Business Development Manager, David Hurley who first joined us in 2010.

Our Brochure and Leaflet letterbox distributors would have walked around the world several times ensuring that at some point all the residents of St George and the Sutherland Shire would have received "the good and latest news" about our activities and services. We are very proud of our glossy International Courses Brochure.



Nola Nutt, SGSCC President, presenting Jesse Bailon with his Outstanding SchoolAge Student Award

## **SGSCC Today**

Post the end of the AMEP contract, SGSCC has been focussing on our International, English, Leisure, Disability, Schoolage and WorkSkills Business Units. The following describes our six Business Units and how we currently market to our communities.

### **English**

SGSCC English offers a diverse range of English courses to improve oral and written communication as well as computer literacy for the workplace and everyday life.

The courses are delivered using funding received under the State Government's Community Service Obligation Funding or on a fee for service basis.

These courses cater for:

- Mature aged learners
- Long and short term unemployed
- Native Australians
- Residents from non-English speaking backgrounds with little or no formal education
- Residents from non-English speaking backgrounds with formal education but currently experiencing barriers to further study or employment

SGSCC also offers bespoke English and literacy classes to be delivered at the workplace to cater for specific industry needs.

English and literacy courses are run in many parts of Sydney by SGSCC.

The SGSCC English teachers are skilled, dynamic and receptive to the needs of all clients.

### **Leisure**

Leisure courses are not just about learning for fun, entertainment or to meet others. They offer much more. SGSCC Leisure offers 14 clearly defined streams from which the customer can choose, including art, handcrafts, music tuition and singing, health, fitness and sporting activities, DIY, cooking skills and languages. These programs promote social connection, encourage return to education, develop practical skills, provide cultural enrichment, mental health benefits and assist in creating work- life balance.

The usage of our Jannali premises has allowed us to expand our offerings to cover daytime cooking and exercise classes along with our more traditional cultural, languages, art and handcraft courses, and other specialised DIY classes like welding and motor repair classes. In 2017 there were 5546 enrolments in our Leisure Program

In the words of our Board President, Nola Nutt, who, along with our other Board members, is a great devotee of our Leisure classes:

“I see people learning and gaining much more than the skills and knowledge for which they enrolled and paid their fees. I see people casually helping one another with tasks, toting and transport. I see people meeting and making other arrangements outside the confines of the College. I see people meet here because it’s safe, social and satisfying”

## **disAbility**

SGSCC disAbility is committed to meeting the learning and development needs of each person with a disability who chooses our service. The aim is to use a flexible approach to maintain and enhance the abilities of People with a Disability through the many options available at the College and in the wider community.

Each PWD is assisted to develop an Individual Education Plan from a person-centred approach, utilising individual support workers. Options for activities include Workforce Preparation, Community Access and Volunteering in the Community, Leisure including, Music, Drama, Arts and Crafts, Swimming; Preparation for Independent Living, including cooking and budgeting; Skill Development, including Computer, Literacy and Numeracy. Over the years funding has been received through the State and Federal governments through Stronger Together, Transition to Work, Post School Options and Day Programs and now the NDIS.

At our site at Jannali our students with a disability operate the Recyclability Market each week. This contributes significantly to fundraising for disability class resources. Spin-off, creative initiatives like our Artitude Program, launched in 2008, which produces wonderfully colourful works generated by groups of our clients with a disability, have also contributed to our fundraising. Our Artitude works have been exhibited at Hazlehurst Gallery, Kogarah Library and at Community Colleges’ conferences. In 2010 Kogarah Council commissioned one of our artworks as their corporate Christmas card. Disability clients can also opt to care for the hens and vegetable garden that exist at our Jannali site. All of these activities have enhanced positively community awareness of the capabilities of People with a Disability.

In recent years our Empowerment FILM crew of PWD, led by staff member Byron Phillips won second place twice in the NOVA Short Film Awards: one starring both our students with a disability and our international students entitled “Mission Possible” a “spoof” on “Mission Impossible”; the other featuring the weekly volunteer work of one of our students with a disability at a local animal rescue organisation.

SGSCC has commenced offering services in the exciting new world of the NDIS, which began in July 2017 and is already extending its services to people who have individual funding packages, including in the area of personal care and leisure needs and activities outside of traditional hours. People who live in other areas of Sydney where the NDIS had commenced earlier are also utilising our service. This gave us early experience of operating in the NDIS world before it officially commenced in our area and informed us so that we commenced with all the IT tools at the ready to assist with the complexities of rostering, invoicing and dealing with the intricacies of individual programs.

In 2018 we are still tested by the great changes brought with the NDIS. We are thrilled by the improvement to the quality of life the NDIS has brought to many People with a Disability and we are grateful for the fact that the funding for the program is beginning to be reviewed as it was far too meagre early in the NDIS. There is, however, inequality being still experienced by some of our clients under the NDIS who we are endeavouring to support through the appeal process.

SGSCC operates a small fleet of mini buses to assist with the growing demand for transporting People with a Disability to our services. Keeping these mini buses maintained and replaced when the time comes are one of the main focuses for our ongoing fundraising activities

## **SchoolAge**

SGSCC SchoolAge offers affordable educational and leisure courses to empower students from Kindergarten to Year 12 to reach their full potential in an innovative learning environment.

In small classes our teachers, who are personally selected on academic merit, skills and experience utilise a range of techniques and strategies tailored to the learning needs of each student and geared to the goals and expected outcomes of the school-based curricula.

Our Senior High School teachers have extensive expertise in teaching, setting and marking assessment tasks.

Initially these courses were offered to assist the children of new migrants struggling at school and later extended to those from the wider population requiring remedial assistance, extension and those preparing for scholarship exams. SGSCC SchoolAge is a dynamic and thriving department of the college and is delivered at our Hurstville and Jannali campuses.



## **WorkSkills**

SGSCC is a Registered Training Organisation and an approved provider of 30 Australian nationally accredited qualifications. We have built strong community partnerships and a reputation for delivering quality training and traineeships in the Community Services sectors of Aged Care, Child Care and Disability Services. We have 80% employment outcomes in these sectors.

We also work with our local school and industry networks to deliver traineeships and skills in, Hospitality, Business, Management and Computers, Workplace Health and Safety and First Aid. We are a well-known and respected vocational and training provider in our area and over greater Sydney.

We are proud to be receiving funding under the State Government Smart and Skilled contract to offer a wide range of vocational and foundation skills courses and training to our community. We are funded to support people experiencing disadvantage to access these courses.

## **International**

Very early in our history it was probably no surprise that our band of ambitious and energetic SGSCC managers would begin to visualise a future where educating the world would be on our radar. This became a regular item in our strategic planning from the first time we undertook formal strategic long-term planning in the 1990's.

In 2002 we formally began to investigate a foray into CRICOS and ELICOS businesses armed with the experience and confidence that sprang from our successful and happy years offering the AMEP to Migrants.

This made us realise that our special brand of teaching, training and pastoral care of people new to Australia could enhance the experience of overseas students.

Our original foray into the provision of English under the Commonwealth ELICOS system was not successful, largely, we believe due to our distance from the Sydney CBD and tourist attractions.

This business changed direction to vocational provision under the Commonwealth CRICOS system in 2013. It currently consists of the Australian Commonwealth Government accredited provision of courses, Certificate III to Advanced Diploma in the Community Service sector which included nine qualifications including Aging Support, Early Childhood Education, Health Services and Community Services.

In this five year period we have graduated over 800 students from nations all over the world including: Philippines; Nepal, Kenya, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Malaysia and Thailand to mention a few.

Progress has been slower than we wished but in keeping with projections. 2018 should see this new business commence profitability as it extends its reach to many other nations

We have also offered, over the years, bi-lingual courses for tourist guides, non-accredited short Study Tours, combining short, focussed English courses in the morning followed by tours around the great sites of Sydney for groups of children or groups of adults, so far mostly from China and Russia. Over the years more than 1500 people have attended these courses. As mentioned previously, we have hosted formal visits from teachers and academics, bureaucrats and VIP'S from several countries in Asia and from Africa, including the Kenyan Educational Attache.



Overseas Student Excursion to the City

## Awards And Honours Received And Given

Over the years our dedicated staff have been recognised for their hard work, dedication and contribution to Adult Education.

- Two Australian National Training Awards 2000 and 2004. One of these was for our programs for People with a Disability, the other for “Innovation in Learning” (see below).
- NSW Adult and Community Education Provider of the Year 2000.
- Finalist as a Provider and for two members of our staff in the Annual NSW Regional Vocational Education and Training Awards.
- Our CEO, Patricia was a Finalist in the Telstra Business Woman of the Year Award for the work she has done as founder of SGSCC in 2000
- In 2000 SGSCC was nominated as Employer of the Year by the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service for employment and work experience given to their clients
- 2004 saw our creativity recognised by our gaining the Innovation In Learning Award for Adult Learners’ Week for our Leef Community Garden
- In 2004 SGSCC CEO, Patricia, was appointed to the Australian Education Network of UNESCO for her work in the setup of Community Colleges NSW
- In 2007 SGSCC CEO, Patricia, represented Australia as the sole delegate to the Education Commission of the fourteenth UNESCO Conference held in Paris
- In 2009 SGSCC won the St George Leader Award for “Outstanding Community Service”
- In recognition of the success of SGSCC in the delivery of the AMEP and of Patricia’s growing profile as SGSCC CEO , Patricia was invited to present a paper at the 2009 NEAS Conference to a National and International audience in Sydney on Managing, Motivating and Retaining Effective Employees.

This paper was sponsored by the University of Queensland. It called on Patricia’s long experience of managing people and her knowledge of Industrial Psychology gleaned in her corporate work life. It gave her a forum to express her strong belief that managing people is the most important and difficult skill required in the workplace. She received great feedback about the paper with the most memorable comment being:

*“Thank you. I really ‘get’ what people management is about now”*

These major awards and the recognition they gave attest to the high profile and quality of SGSCC. Over the years, mostly in Adult Learners’ Week in September, we have given numerous Outstanding Tutor and Employee Service Awards to our staff in recognition of their quality service to SGSCC. We have presented awards to our students and clients in recognition of their achievements and dedication to continuing their learning.

## **Today: SGSCC's Culture and Values**

The culture and values of our college underpin our success and we are committed to:

Contributing to the economic and social development of the community.

Excelling in the delivery of our products, customer service and partnerships.

We positively network with other organisations to cater for the lifelong learning needs of the whole community.

Continuous improvement. We are committed to continuous improvement throughout, by always seeking new and better ways of giving excellent service in a changing environment.

Embodying the principles of a fair and equitable society, promoting social cohesion and removing barriers to education, training and employment.

We are committed to ensuring distance is no longer a challenge. It brings a greater wealth of opportunities to explore and to learn with.

Our customers view us as being reliable, competent, and flexible, responsible, corporate and community citizens, and most importantly a college that contributes significantly to their wellbeing.

In our 2011 whole of College satisfaction survey 87.5% of students who responded (sample size =472) would recommend the College to a friend or family member. 92.6% rated our services as value for money. 95.1% rated their overall experience of SGSCC as positive and 92.4% their experience of our courses as positive. These results were very pleasing testimonials from our student body.

On a visit to SGSCC in September 2011 the NSW Education Minister, Adrian Piccoli made the comment that he was impressed with “the breadth, commitment, entrepreneurialism, and educational products on the scope of SGSCC”

The staff of SGSCC, like to think of ourselves as “entrepreneurs with a heart” because of our commitment to disadvantaged learners and to the continuing growth of our endeavours.

## **Corporate Citizenship - Our Contribution To Our Community**

When those who have worked at SGSCC get to the “pearly gates” and St Peter, or his equivalent, asks what we have done for our community the following SGSCC endeavours might possibly be described to help us gain admission.



Patricia and Kringen Students - Early 1980's



LEAP, Disability and infrastructure staff, Jannali - 1994





International Opportunities - Signing the MOU with President of the Chengdu University, Mr Zhou



Erin Carroll celebrating with Jannali Staff





Community Colleges NSW Board and Patricia brainstorming



One of the early College Cars. We worked hard for this!



Adult Learners Week Celebrations - All hands on deck



Patricia and fellow board members ECCA





Another "Eating College" Event. Patricia with disability clients Celebrating Christmas, 1980



Promotion time. Heather, Lyn and Cheryl late 1990's



AMEP Students Hurstville late 1990's



Tee Ball Team - SGSCC disAbility





More Balloons!! Kay Patterson and Lyn Millican



Jannali Staff - 1997

## **Courses and Services for People with a Disability**

The story of SGSCC commenced with the birth of a child with a disability. SGSCC's culture across all its activities was forged through its care and concern for People with a Disability: that they should enjoy and access life and community to the full and reach their full potential. SGSCC over the years has provided service to the full range of People with a Disability from people with severe degrees of intellectual disability to those with mild disability and those with physical disabilities. It has ensured, to the best of its ability that the properties it uses are accessible to people with physical disabilities. It has subsidised all the above from its own resources or has received funds from generous donors to enable this. It has assisted other Disability Services to survive through difficult times and to train their staff.

This care and support of People with a Disability has spread to all our endeavours. Our pastoral care is extended to all who learn with us or use our services, has become "our point of difference" and enabled us to diversify and grow our business to service all sectors of society, including the business sector and, in recent times, international students.

## **Seniors Courses**

SGSCC has been dedicated for many years to providing for the educational and leisure needs of Seniors. We commenced our now internally subsidised courses for Seniors after Patricia was invited to attend a conference on the needs of Seniors run by the Department of Aging in 1997. Soon after this we were successful in tendering for seed funding from BACE and commenced our first courses tailored to the needs of Seniors for stimulating activities to enjoy in their retirement years. Since then thousands of Seniors have attended our wide range of courses. We have encouraged our Senior students to let us know what they would like to study. Our most requested and most popular courses have been our Film Appreciation courses with our own Mr Movies, Frank Bladwell. RIP, Frank.

Other requests have ranged from "alternative" courses like Astrology, Palmistry and Tarot Reading to History, Russian Culture and Politics, Swedish, Spanish culture, Arabic culture and cuisine. Our great thanks to Paula Kendall for her research, detective and tireless work to find tutors for these courses. Each Seniors Morning includes an hour of Gentle Exercise and time to socialise around morning tea.

The importance of these courses was highlighted by one of our students who told us that she had been very lonely after coming, at the invitation of her extended family, to live in the Sutherland Shire. She had recently left another part of New South Wales following the death of her husband. This lady decided to come to our Seniors Morning and there she established a new network of friends, helping her to embrace her new community and happily forge a new way of life.



## **Computer Courses for Seniors**

Following the conference on the needs of Seniors mentioned previously, Patricia introduced the idea of running internally subsidised computer courses for Seniors. At the conference Patricia had been moved by the alienation expressed by Seniors from the widespread take-up by the community of computers, their inability to understand this new world being embraced by their children and grandchildren, their fear of showing their ignorance if they joined computer classes with younger people. SGSCC was the first Community College to offer affordable computer courses tailored for Seniors.

It was many years before other community colleges followed suit and government and corporates began to assist with grants to bring Seniors into the IT age with what became known as “Tech Savvy Seniors” courses for which we were grateful, finally, to receive funding to continue our offering at a subsidised rate.

## **Pension Discounts to Assist Disadvantaged People**

In spite of no longer receiving government funding for Leisure courses SGSCC has managed still to offer pension discounts for older members of our community, to disadvantaged and unemployed people to encourage them back into learning and social life at SGSCC.

## **Our Scholarship System**

Our Scholarship system was established to assist people in serious financial need to attend courses free of charge. This requires nomination by a third party. The greatest beneficiaries of our Scholarship System have been people recovering from long-term mental health issues and the accompanying long-term unemployment who are ready to join the mainstream again and have been referred to us by the Mental Health Units of our local hospitals. It is wonderful for us to see so many people get their lives and their social skills back from joining our classes under this system. It is a great disappointment that government fails to support us financially for this vital program.

## **Affordable Coaching**

Over the years SGSCC has assisted many families, who, in many cases, had more than one child needing expert educational coaching. Our thanks to Carolyn Ayre and Kerry Caldwell for their skills in finding highly qualified and experienced teachers who were prepared to keep their fees affordable to assist these challenged families and for ensuring ongoing quality teaching and learning in this vital program. Thanks also for

the “administrative nightmare” Carolyn and Kerry have endured with enabling these families to pay in instalments and, in many cases with discounts when more than one child needed our services. Budgeting this program has been a real feat!

## **Recovery College**

For the last four years we have been involved along with one of our sister Community Colleges and the local area Health Department in a pilot program, housing courses for people recovering from mental health episodes, run by tutors with lived experience. For these people it has been a great bonus to attend their classes along with other students of SGSCC courses in, what they tell us, is SGSCC’s welcoming community venue.

## **Hosting Work Experience**

Because of Patricia’s founding Board membership of the Business Enterprise Network and Bernadette Mills, our VET Manager succeeding her on this Board, we have hosted thousands of school students for Work Experience. In many cases this has assisted these young people to discover vocational pathways they were not aware of before their experience with us.

## **SGSCC Jannali: A Community Asset**

The history of SGSCC has been of a “rich fabric”. There have not been many “dull moments” at SGSCC. We have always believed that our centre at Jannali was a community asset, not solely the domain of SGSCC and its activities.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Leader, Tanya Plibersek, was an ex-student of the Old Jannali Girls High School site which is the property which houses our head office and many of our activities.

Tanya, when newly promoted to higher political office, used our site for photographs and our archives for information for a media piece on her life story.

Other members of our student alumni attended the site in their school years.

We have also housed “Old Girls” of Jannali Girls High reunions, community festivities, inter-agency meetings and community and school education expos over the years.

## Other Achievements

SGSCC has established a number of successful partnerships over its life with international, national, local industry and commercial clients. It has served people over the full spectrum of community life from young to old, unemployed people, people with disabilities, migrants, older persons, indigenous groups, women, reflecting the broad range of courses SGSCC has offered over the years. We have educational partnerships with a range of Community Colleges and the University of Wollongong. We work closely with a number of Government Departments. We now network with international educational agents and service the educational needs and pastoral care of international students from many foreign countries.

Our founding CEO has had membership of corporate, community and private equity Boards for more than 30 years, enhancing our wider reach and reputation. These Boards include TAFE Boards, Board of the NSW Council of Intellectual Disability. Chairing of Catholic Archdiocesan Advisory Board for Catholic Education and Curriculum. She was Chair of Community Colleges NSW from 2001 to 2004, was a founding Director and Board member of Community Colleges Australia for seven years till 2014.

A twelve year involvement by Patricia as a founding Board Member of the now Sydney Business Education Network culminated in SGSCC's sponsorship of the Speedacious Team F1 in Schools which helped the all-girl team to victory in the Fastest Car category, further strengthening our ties with BEN and local schools. As mentioned previously, Patricia was succeeded by SGSCC VET Manager, Bernadette Mills as a current BEN Board Member.

As also previously mentioned, her contribution to Australian Adult Education was recognised with an invitation to a world-wide conference of Community College Principals and she was chosen as the opening presenter of a paper on the Role of the Community College in Economic Development at Oxford University in 2001. She is currently honoured with a second term of membership of the Sutherland Shire Economic Development and Tourism Advisory Board.

SGSCC, now a PBI since 2014, has established a Fundraising Foundation to improve the number of Scholarships provided to disadvantaged people and the quality of our resources required for People with a Disability. Over the years we have had great times and successes organising fêtes, Bunnings BBQ's, exhibitions, markets and other events. Fundraising will be an important ongoing need for SGSCC and will require focus and further attention and resources into the future.

The SGSCC is now widely admired as a leading, quality, diverse educational body and is frequently called upon for assistance, support and mentoring to other Community Colleges, and to a range of educational and community service providers. From 2003 for two years SGSCC provided a CEO Service to the Deaf Education Network whilst it recovered from difficult times.

## **Our Champions, Our Partners Our Thanks Go To**

Our Board Members, especially Nola Nutt, Board Chair extraordinaire for her wisdom, experience, and undying support to SGSCC over decades, Jim McDonald and, Lorraine Hedges for their long-term Board Membership, loyalty, support and humour.

Our Board members have come from many backgrounds, ethnic origins and cultures and have brought experience to our board from different generations and walks of life including educators, politicians, bureaucrats, retired company secretaries, editors, social workers, graphic artists, Qantas pilots, businessmen and women from manufacturing, shipping, printing, car sales, and senior managers including current and ex CEO's and HR managers, medical doctors and administrators, ambulance officers, carers and family members of PWD, university students, Rotarians, all creating such a rich tapestry of community involvement. Most of them have been recruited from our College student pool. Many are women who have valued the opportunity denied to many women to acquire Board membership experience.

We pride ourselves as a Board on our ongoing professional development and annual Board and Board member evaluation. We have evolved an awareness, as a Board, to attempt to represent the diversity of our Community, and to draw representatives from different age groups. We are grateful for our Board's ongoing support and at the same time, that they are not averse to calculated risk; that they are present at our ceremonial occasions, openings, exhibits, graduations and celebrations.

To Our Parent Advisory Committee: Our thanks to the many parents of our clients with a disability who have assisted us with their wisdom, experience and advocacy skills to ensure that our services to People with a Disability were given with the utmost sensitivity, relevance and best practice.

To the Schools of St George and the Sutherland Shire who have supported us by the use of their school properties and facilities out of hours: Kogarah, Hurstville, Peakhurst, Georges River, Port Hacking, Engadine, Cronulla and Menai High Schools.

To the Education Department of NSW for the use of our Jannali premises over so many years.

To Peter O'Reilly who initially pointed us in the direction of our Jannali home which has been so pivotal to the service we give to our community and beyond.

To Brian Naylor who, as part of the daytime Port Hacking Industrial Arts staff, so graciously supported Patricia in the early days of the College and continued the capable, committed running of the Port Hacking site- co-ordination for many years after Patricia took over the management of the amalgamated, regional college.

To Cliff Pacey, Principal of the Macarthur Community College, for his assistance with our IT and Finance Systems and his professional support over many years to Patricia and to SGSCC.

To BAE and later BACE, for funding over the earlier years of the College; for their support with the governance training of our Board and their investment in valuable resources like "Informed and In Control" to assist this.

Our thanks to them for "buying in" early to the growing agenda for vocational education and training thereby assuring ongoing government support of Community Colleges like SGSCC.

To the University of Wollongong, UOW, for their support in offering assistance and pathways to our students into their Degree courses.

To UNESCO for their funding which enabled us to run a most interesting and valuable series of lectures and discussion on Understanding Islam. This course was run by Ahmed Kailani, a member of the Muslim Village Association, post the Cronulla riots. Police were alerted in anticipation of possible "anti-Islam" behaviour in these classes. With the exception of one very vocal, disruptive older person representing "white supremacists", who those present voted to remove, all who attended were enlightened by the similarities of Muslim values to those of other religions. Ahmed also organised a visit to the Mosque at Auburn, which was thoroughly inspiring and enjoyed by the participants.

Eighty people attended these courses. We believe the knowledge and understanding gained filtered through to many others in the community. Many participants expressed gratitude for the learning and were inspired to spread the message of tolerance in the community. Some participants were teachers who had come so they could share the information they received with their students. We greatly admired their dedication to bringing tolerance to our young people in our community.

Our thanks to our Paula Kendall for finding Ahmed and co-ordinating this most important, historical, community educational event for SGSCC.

To our local Councils for the many grants we have received over the years to enhance our programs and our sites.

To our local Libraries across the St George Region, the Sutherland Shire and beyond for their assistance in promoting our courses by housing our Brochures and promotional “taster” courses.

To the Sutherland Council for their contributions to our Drama and Puppetry Program in 2001, and our ‘Out There’ Theatre Company in 2002. For their generous donations of \$20K to set up our Community Garden in Jannali in 2000, for \$4900 for our Advocacy Program for People with a Disability in 2002 and for \$7,300 in 2014 for film equipment for our Empowerment film group for People with a Disability.

For their contribution to the facilitation of our five-yearly strategic planning occasions and encouraging some of their senior managers to serve as members of our Board.

To State Emergency Services for the privilege of training their volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

To Disability Client, Stephen Honeywell, larger than life and great of heart who, unleashing his mammoth charisma, along with our then Disability Options Manager, Cathy Lovelock, convinced the Sutherland Shire Council to give us the generous grant for our Community Garden. The week after this Council visit Stephen died suddenly. The Community Garden displays his memorial plaque and our abiding thanks and cherished memory of him.

Our thanks to all our Community Garden Volunteers who have helped to maintain our garden over the years

To Matthew Randall, another long-term Disability client, who, in 2011, sat on a bus next to Angela Rose, who was freshly arrived from New Zealand. Matthew convinced Angela to volunteer in our Disability program. Thereby commenced a third generation Disability Manager extraordinaire.

The Rotary Clubs of Hurstville and Jannali for their financial and hands-on support at our community events whenever we called on them. Over the past few years the Rotary Club of Sutherland has painted the Elouera Building and provided concrete for our chicken coop. In addition, through association with the Rotary Club, the College has benefited from receiving a defibrillator through Response For Life.



The Work for the Dole Scheme which helped us construct our chook run and assisted us with our Community Garden, enabling us to win a number of local, state and national awards as mentioned above

Centrelink, Job Network and Jobs Australia members for utilising our training services for their clients

To the hundreds of host employers all over Sydney and beyond who have taken on board our students for work experience and work placement over many years. Thank you to the many hosts who have offered permanent employment to many of these students in recognition of the quality of the training we have given to our students.

The Cronulla Sharks for their donations, for the visits which have so especially thrilled our clients with a disability and their support in utilising our cooking courses to improve the nutrition of their players.

Miranda RSL for sponsoring our cooking classes for veterans and computer classes for the general community.

In later years the Club on East for their generous donations to our Disability endeavours.

Corporates including Ansto, Sydney Symphony, Toyota, the Novotel Brighton for sponsoring some of our marketing and utilising our services to train their staff.



Eleni Petinos, Member for Miranda and clients give SGSCC disAbility the thumbs up!

Our thanks to Anne Sargent, Australian champion netballer, for the partnership with SGSCC that enabled many of our local young netballers to improve their skills in our training clinics in school holidays over many years. Thanks to ex staff member, Lyn Millican, who introduced SGSCC to Anne and who co-ordinated these classes.

Thanks to the Cronulla Surf School for many years of partnership and for helping our students to enjoy our beautiful beaches safely and to the full.

The Kurranulla Aboriginal Corporation for assisting us to reach our local Aboriginal Community with our courses especially in VET and computer courses and to Les Bursill, a most amazing man, who has helped and inspired us as SGSCC Board member, and as teacher with his knowledge of indigenous culture and local sacred sites.

Local, State and Federal Politicians from all parties who championed SGSCC causes, who helped us by sponsoring us for funding to grow our services and were kind enough to praise our efforts; ensuring our name “in lights in Hansard” on a number of occasions for our work in the education of people of all abilities in our community.

Local Migrant Resource Centres for their partnerships and referrals of their many clients over the years.

CASS, The Chinese Australian Services Society for entrusting to us the training of their new migrant members and their staff over many years

The St George and Sutherland Shire Leader for their support in running stories about the trials, battles, wins and losses of SGSCC over the years.

Community organisations like Sister to Sister, St George Careers Development for their referrals to our courses.

The St George Hospital Mental Health Unit for valuing our work and utilising our courses and scholarships to launch people who are recovering from mental health challenges back into the community. At SGSCC we are humbled by the faith placed by the Hospital in our services and the courage displayed by these clients as they get their lives back into full swing again.

Our thanks to Michael Carroll for the decades, 40 years, of quality legal advice delivered all around the clock.

To Erin Carroll for coming into the world and inspiring her mother to create post-school learning and options for her which grew into SGSCC.

**To our many individual, student and corporate Donors:**  
**Our thanks go to:**

- Philanthropist Charles Burnett III – The Notsew Orm Sands Foundation
- ABC Garden Competition
- Sutherland Council Grants/Arts/Garden
- Cronulla Sharks
- UPS
- ADHC Equipment & Modifications Funding
- Australian Sports Commission
- Como Jannali Rotary Club
- Sutherland Shire Lioness Club
- Woollooware Golf Club
- Jason Stevens & The Vault Computer Company
- The Tradies Give Me Back Program
- Club on East
- Bunnings Kirrawee
- Peter Caha
- IGA Jannali
- OLSEN Funerals: For the donation of their time and their voluntary support to our programs for PWD.

You have assisted us to follow our dreams to provide the best service we can to our community.



Narelle, Rebecca, Paula and Angela cooking up a storm/fundraising at the Bunnings Kirrawee

## **To our Managers, Staff and Tutors**

Long term: Cathy Lovelock, Disability, for her passion, care and devotion over so many years to PWD and to Alison Hodge, then manager of the program, for asking Cathy to relieve one night in the Kringen program at Port Hacking High to commence Cathy's stellar, long-term career, which assisted thousands of People with a Disability.

To Angela Rose so capably now managing our Disability Services thanks to her own passion and abilities and thorough mentoring done by Cathy over some five years.

To Paula Kendall, Resources, Seniors Program and Quality Manager and recently appointed Assistant Manager Disability for her talent, flexibility and research, presentation and tendering skills and her contribution to the management of each of our business units over her long-term career with SGSCC.

To Kerry Caldwell and Carolyn Ayre for their years of quality delivery and assistance to migrants and disadvantaged people with their English and settlement needs and also their generous and devoted service to our Schoolage clients and their families.

To a line of Literacy and English Language Managers from Bernadette Cavanagh to our AMEP Managers Ruth Fyfe, Glor Wong, Christine Chew and Daniel Chan.

To our International Managers, Ian Tritton and our current international champion Manager, Stephen Licciardello, who showed us the way to the world.

To a line of six entrepreneurial and talented VET Managers from our first, Pam Mitchell to our present, Bernadette Mills who has taken our VET business to new heights in the domestic and international arenas.

To David Hurley our first, full-time Marketing and Business Development Manager.

To a line of Leisure Managers: from Barbara Edwards, Don Sinclair to Nicole Everett to the current manager, David Hurley and his team.

To Graham Thom our recently retired Compliance Manager for getting us through so many audits, who continues as our Compliance Consultant and now Board member.

To our infrastructural Managers: three previous Finance Managers, with great thanks to Ray Conway who was our first and longest serving so far and our current Finance Manager, Vicky Zhang who has brought our accounting into best practice; to HR/ Executive Assistants, Assistant Principals, Alison Hodge, Bernadette Cavanagh, Barbara Edwards, Cheryl Gocher and current superwoman Terry Higgins who manages everything from our HR to our property and IT needs.

To those many people who have assisted our Managers in their daily tasks and with the preservation of their sanity as they serve our students, our community and our business.

To our numerous Site Co-ordinators who manned the fort and continued service and security when the day shift went home and especially to Denise Gilpin who has served at Jannali for many years and to Trevor and Deidre Haney who turned our Kogarah High site into such a fun place to learn and work and who helped recruit many valuable members of our student body there to contribute as members of our SGSCC Board. RIP Trevor, and Ken Cox who assisted with Site- Co-ordination and Brochure deliveries for many years of dedicated service.

To past General Assistants, Bob and Helen Christie and to Bill Higgins, our current Assistant Property Manager for his upkeep and improvement of Jannali and patient service to all who learn and work here.

To our Tutors, adding up to the thousands over the years, from so many walks of life and backgrounds whom we have wished into being and who have miraculously appeared to share their knowledge, wisdom, care, concern and inspiration. Especially those like Judy Madden, Floral Art Tutor who have seen us through the College journey right from the start to the present day and generously took on site-co-ordination with her husband, Geoff, in the later part of her tutoring career to assist us at our Kogarah site.

We could never thank you all or pay you enough for your contribution to SGSCC and our Community.



Don Sinclair, Judy & Arthur Bransgrove, Building Opening







## **Our Frustrations and Disappointments**

Inevitably there have been some frustrations and disappointments over the years for those who have worked with SGSCC. Fortunately, there are not too many.

One of our biggest disappointments has been that, in spite of our efforts, we have not been able (because of our “more affluent community” profile) to attract sufficient government funding to set up alternative schooling for young people who become alienated from traditional schooling. We have demonstrated our capacity for this vital activity with our work with disadvantaged youth in the LEAP program, mentioned above, and programs we now have in place to assist school-aged young people with their studies. Alas we have not been able to effect a much needed change in government policy in this vital area.

Another big disappointment is that, post our loss of the Adult Migrant English Program, securing membership of another consortium to deliver this important program has eluded us, in spite of our efforts to try to become involved again in this work. A return to the “bad old days” of monopoly by large organisations appears to be the status quo for delivery of this program. The community is the poorer for this, we at SGSCC believe.

Other frustrations occurred with the last minute decision of the Deaf Education Network to amalgamate with the Deaf Society in spite of SGSCC supporting them to survive hard times. The decision by BEN, after much “to-ing and fro-ing” and due diligence by both BEN and SGSCC, not to amalgamate with SGSCC, when their federal funding was returned to them, was also disappointing. These two experiences confirmed us in our culture and values of service to our larger community and colleagues where we can; that it is always better to give than to receive; that, for SGSCC, growth in our business is better achieved through our own efforts, creativity and diversification rather than being caught up in the uncertainties and complexities of amalgamation with other organisations.

## **2017: SGSCC Becomes A Community Based Business**

The coming of the NDIS heralded the end to block government funding to SGSCC. Apart from a small percentage of upfront funds coming from the State Government for Community Service Obligation Funding, which assists disadvantaged people undertake vocational learning and the occasional grant won in competitive tendering rounds, SGSCC is now a fully functioning community business. The diversity of its offerings, the dynamism of its hard- working team, its balanced but not risk- averse Board and its strengthening financial base bode well for the future of SGSCC.

## **2018: The Time of Writing This History**

The hard times are hopefully behind us as we prepare for our 40th Anniversary in 2019. A milestone indeed!

Our future looks bright. What a ride it has been! It is with pride in our past that we embrace generational change and great hope for our future.

SGSCC commenced from a small vision of a mother seeking further education for her daughter with a disability. Many committed and talented women and men supported this vision from inside and outside of SGSCC. SGSCC has managed to survive through good times, bad times, testing times and even tragic times. St George and Sutherland Community College is now a strong community icon. A quality, entrepreneurial college with a heart; a dynamic and innovative community educational provider for all has emerged.

## Acronym List

AMEP:	Adult Migrant English Program
ASQA:	Australian Skills Quality Authority
BAE:	Board of Adult Education, a statutory body of the NSW Education Department which later became known as BACE, Board of Adult and Community Education, which has now morphed into State training, which now sits under the Department of Industry. All bodies have given grants for education and training over the years to SGSCC.
BEN:	Business Education Network
CASS:	Chinese Australian Services Society
CRICOS:	Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students
CSO:	Community Service Obligation Funding and Courses
ECCA:	Evening & Community Colleges Association
ELICOS:	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
ESL:	English as a Second Language
LEAP:	Land Environment Action Program for disadvantaged youth
NDIS:	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NEAS:	National ELT (English Language Teaching) Accreditation Scheme
PBI:	Public Benevolent Institution
PWD:	People with a Disability
SGSCC:	St George and Sutherland Community College
VET:	Vocational Education and Training

## **Afterword**

I have chosen the third person as the voice for the writing of the SGSCC story. I am not a fan of the personal pronoun “I”.

My thanks to:

My Husband, Michael, for his belief that SGSCC is a community icon and suggesting the title for the SGSCC history.

Terry Higgins, Kerry Caldwell, Carolyn Ayre, Paula Kendall and David Hurley for the assistance with editing of the SGSCC story.

SGSCC is an idea whose time has, and continues to come, thanks to the efforts of many, all of whom could not be individually named as they are in the thousands.

I am conscious that my role has been that of a catalyst. I received all the help that I needed to give form to the SGSCC idea. Thanks to Nola Nutt for her decades of support and to the communities and individuals of St George and Sutherland who made SGSCC happen. My thanks to the SGSCC family and my own family who helped the idea come to life.

My thanks to the Good Lord who I felt was always my guide, refuge and strength through the inevitable tough times and challenges. What a privilege it has been!

So much to celebrate! We have had such fun along the way!

We have built, survived and thrived through 40 years!

I believe a solid foundation exists on which to build our future.

**Patricia Carroll**  
**CEO**



Patricia & Michael Carroll - Sutherland to Surf



Patricia Telstra Business Woman Finalist, 2000



With our PM - Artitude Launch



Patricia - UNESCO rep



Community College Principals having fun



Minister Ruddock, CASS Staff with Ruth and Patricia



Trash to Treasure - Furniture restoration students priming a chair



Opening UNESCO Conference - Paris 2007





Chinese Brush Painting Exhibits - Therese Hasham



Motor Vehicle Restoration



Sign Language Students communicating



Teddy Bear Making Class... so cute



Student drawing a local landmark



AMEP Excursion



The Stingers - SGSCC disAbility Baseball Team



Seated Yoga... so synchronised





Catching up with fellow Community College Colleagues



Furniture Restoration Class



Community Garden Launch



Sculpture Class



Mt Emei, Chengdu



Ongoing Professional Development



Cathy Lovelock, congratulating Neville Fleeton, Volunteer of Year Award



"Fiver for a Farmer" Fundraising at SGSCC

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The SGSCC Team - 2018

“I found coming to Australia hard and couldn’t make myself understood. Learning English with St George & Sutherland Community College has helped me find a job in a local shop and I have made lots of new friends”

*Mei Ling*

“I have been pleased to note the strong growth of St George and Sutherland Community College in both its enrolments and the range of programs and services offered to the people and businesses of the region.”

*Sam Thomas - Director BACE*

“With patience, understanding and skill, staff at SGSCC disAbility slowly helped me to overcome my trepidation and fears and gradually my self-esteem, confidence and motivation grew.

*Anne Brett*

“Our experience at the course was nothing short of life changing.  
The assertiveness skills we learnt have helped us so much in communicating with everyone around us”

*Raj Gurmukhani*

“Janice is an awesome and patient teacher.  
She has inspired me to go forward with knitting experience”

*Shilpa Gupta*