ALL: Re-framing the practices that bind us

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This workshop will address:
Any radical relocation in socio-institutional space provokes an equally radical re-examination, perhaps even reconstruction of one’s identity and sense of self. This workshop rests on the premise that the dramatic repositioning of ALL from its previous precarious and marginalised status into a central role within the emerging learning curriculum, requires that ALL reflect deeply on its defining practices, values, commitments, ways of knowing, aspirations and so on; in short on its identity in this new institutional context. Otherwise, instead of basking in the glow of ‘being wanted at last’, we may find ourselves drowning (or dissolving) beneath the weight of ever expanding demand and with little power of the terms on which we operate.

This workshop looks to foster a discussion intent on gradually forging a broad consensus about the identity and roles of ALL. Without such a dialogue, ALL may simply continue old habits of responding to institutional transformations with short-term, tactical responses aimed at institutional survival, not longer-term strategic responses. Thus, the question addressed in this paper is: What, in the eyes of the field of ALL, could or should be ‘the place’ of ALL in the new emerging university landscape?

It will address it by:
1. Outline of the institutional background (15 mins)
2. Presentation of a possible framework for capturing ALL (15 mins)
3. Break into groups to discuss, adapt, enrich, re-design, or re-place the framework (40 mins)
4. Re-assemble and compare findings/creations of different groups (30 mins)
5. Final debrief and evaluation: Where to from here? (15 mins)

Rob McCormack has been involved in language and literacy education for over 35 years including secondary literacy, adult basic education, tertiary preparation and academic literacy for university students. From 1983-93 he worked in a team working to articulate a fruitful pedagogy for young people and second chance adults from the western suburbs of Melbourne. From 1996-2003 he worked at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, Northern Territory where, among other duties, he began to systematically draw on ancient European rhetoric for the design of two core Institute-wide first-year transition units in Public Communication and Indigenous Histories. Returning to VU in 2005, Rob established an award-winning Student Rover program for the new Learning Commons, and is now working with PhD students to improve their academic and research literacies.