

# GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

The Australian Dyslexia Association (ADA) is an incorporated non-profit association, concerned with the well-being, educational identification, and educational treatment of individuals with dyslexia or a related difference.

*Australia is the third largest English speaking country in the world; yet, it still lags behind the United Kingdom and United States in the identification and educational treatment of dyslexia.* In order to promote change in Australia and provide evidence-based information and training to teachers and parents, the ADA was created.

Founding member and ADA president Jodi Clements recalls her own personal experience relating to dyslexia in Australia 10 years ago. "I went searching for post-graduate, specialist



ADA President, Jodi Clements is currently studying for her doctorate in dyslexia.

dyslexia studies available in Australia and found very few practical, evidence-based courses relating to the teaching of students with reading difficulties [dyslexia] in Australia. I had already studied at the master's level in the field of linguistics [literacy] but what I really needed was specialized, practical pedagogy to assist my teaching, so that I could "unlock the written code" for the many bright children I was teaching who were resistant to traditional methods and who required a different approach to master written language.

At the time, I never envisaged having to pack up and train in upstate New York, but it was the best move in my career to date!"

Jodi Clements went on to be trained under masterful Orton-Gillingham trainers Diana Hanbury-King and Karen Leopold at the Kildonan School. Then, in 2008, she finally moved back to Australia. In 2010 the ADA incorporated and that same year was recognized as a Global Partner to the International Dyslexia Association for Australia.

The ADA was created by real-life teachers and speech/language pathologists who have undertaken post-graduate, ADA accredited training in a multisensory structured language (MSL) approach. While the ADA does not endorse any particular method or program, it does support an MSL approach for teaching individuals with dyslexia or a related cause.

The ADA provides teacher accreditation and training in the MSL approach in Australia, and there has been a positive increase in schools taking up training. To date, MSL training feedback from participants has been very positive. Sarah Holmes, who handles admissions for ADA, MSL training, reported that teacher written feedback given after the MSL course indicates that all attendees have a common question: "Why was this information and pedagogy not offered in my undergraduate education degree?" Many Australian teachers are passionate about assisting students with reading difficulties,

including dyslexia, but they need access to evidence-based teaching to add to their skill set. MSL allows educators to gain new knowledge about how the brain learns to read and how to teach children to read, particularly children who are at risk or who have persistent reading and spelling difficulties.

Membership in the ADA is growing, and its members continue to raise dyslexia awareness in Australian schools, universities, and the work place. The ADA is determined to lift the stigma off the word *dyslexia* in Australia by considering it a *learning difference* rather than a *disability*. The ADA has many vital aims, but there are three key aims that its members believe are essential to making a difference to the lives of those affected by dyslexia: teacher training, early intervention, and emotional empowerment. Teacher training is the key to identifying at-risk students and improving the way reading and spelling are taught in Australian schools. Early intervention is the key to avoiding the pitfalls of the secondary and emotional effects of dyslexia, and emotional empowerment is the key for maintaining self-esteem and cultivating one's strengths while working on the weaknesses.

Visit the ADA online at <http://dyslexiaassociation.org.au/>

## ADA 2010–2013

- ADA continues to raise awareness of dyslexia in Australia to members and non-members through ADA's website and links, newsletters, print interviews, radio and television spots, ADA educational reports, film clips, posters, seminars, and teacher and parent training.
- ADA continues to advocate for improved teacher training and equitable provisions and accommodations for all students identified with dyslexia in Australia.
- The ADA supports the Australian Dyslexia Working Party document.
- All States and Territories in Australia now recognize dyslexia under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992.
- ADA has had continued success with ADA dyslexia assessments and reports for Australian schools, universities, and colleges without the use of an IQ test [psychometric testing].
- In 2012, the ADA gained the support of Queensland, Australia's Education Minister for promoting Dyslexia Friendly Schools. In August, 2012, the ADA achieved the first ADA Dyslexia Friendly School in QLD, Australia, other states are following.
- ADA's Camp Success is in careful planning and will be the first Australian camp for children affected by dyslexia and related language-based differences.
- ADA will continue to support the IDA through the Global Partnership Program.