

## **Adult Learning Australia Statement on the Australian Bushfires**



Adult Learning Australia (ALA) acknowledges the devastating impact the Australian bushfires have had and are still having on our community, ecology and economy. People have perished, businesses, homes and stock have been lost, and more than 1 billion wildlife are estimated dead, with many more injured or left starving.

ALA extends its sympathy to all the people who are directly and indirectly effected. We thank the many people and organisations that have given and are still giving of their time and efforts to provide help and support to our communities in need. We also acknowledge the goodwill and well wishes from people and countries around the globe.

Australia is the driest continent in the world and according to the CSIRO has grown 1 degree hotter over the last century. Scientific evidence is telling us that there will be more extreme weather events like the current bushfires in the future. We must learn to deal with extreme weather events more effectively than we currently do now. We need to better plan, prepare, mitigate, respond, recover and rejuvenate from these disasters and climate change disruptions.

The recent bushfires have focused attention on the crucial role that many adult and community education (ACE) organisations play in emergency management and recovery by providing venues, coordinating volunteers, training, food, support, counselling and emergency relief.

We need support for improving opportunities for ACE especially in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia, which often have less resources and infrastructure to build and maintain community resilience and capability.



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*Since the 2016 bushfire that devastated the WA town of Yarloop in 2016 the local Community Resource Centre has become the hub for recovery efforts and community education says Manager Julie-Ann Ford*

UNESCO recognises the important role of education and learning in dealing with the effects of climate change. And ALA agrees that ACE has a crucial role to play. Not just in



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helping us create a better way of alleviating any disaster, but in raising awareness, supporting us to be better informed, and improving practices and behaviours that help us to respond and adapt to, manage, and mitigate against such extreme events.

ACE helps people develop the knowledge, skills, understanding and values to take responsible action. It improves understanding of the impact of what we do today on our environment and the planet in the future. It helps people make better and more informed decisions, engage in critical thinking and empowers citizens to take participatory action.

We can also learn much from First Nations people about how to care for country and draw on all the available evidence and knowledge, including working together to improve our collective land literacy.

These bushfires have been a wakeup call. We can't keep doing things the way we've done them before. When the air, the water and the earth are suffocated, so are we. We need to learn and change. ACE can play a vital role in this process and help liberate us to create a new story for our future.

What we need now is for a federal government response that complements and supports the efforts of ACE organisations and includes ACE as an essential component for any national strategy that aims to tackle climate change.

Adult Learning Australia is the national peak body for adult and community education with over 1,000 members representing all states and territories of Australia.

#### **Media contact**

Visit [www.ala.asn.au](http://www.ala.asn.au) or call 03 9689 8623 for more information

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