ADULT LEARNING AUSTRALIA

eca

Australian adult community education environmental scan

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Executive summary

A key message of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is 'leave no one behind'. While adult community education plays a key role in achieving the ambitions of the Sustainable Development Goals, 'not everyone has the same opportunity to access and benefit from it' (UNESCO, 2019).

> The existing role and potential of adult community education (ACE) to provide access to lifelong learning and pathway opportunities may be gaining traction in some states, however, investment remains low; participation patchy and data on the fullness of ACE provision is insufficient.

Even though ACE has long been referred to as a distinct fourth educational sector in Australia, it is structured quite differently to the other three sectors: school, vocational education and training (VET) and university. Its needs, governance and organisation are quite distinct and can only be understood through careful analysis.

In Australia, education is a shared federal and state government responsibility. How this responsibility is shared across jurisdictions is inconsistent. ACE tends to get lost largely because it is often misunderstood and the socio-economic benefits are not well defined.

ACE providers deliver non-accredited and/or accredited education programs; including foundation skills programs in language, literacy and numeracy, as well as digital skills, study, job and life skills. These programs support adults to engage in community life; find a job and/or continue onto further learning or vocational training.

> ACE programs also have wider benefits including improving adults' health, wellbeing, social networks and confidence. Programs are learner centred as well as community and needs based.

About the scan

This scan profiles the sector in terms of its programs, features, provider types, participants, outcomes and supporting policy areas. It also explores the challenges facing the sector in terms of sustainability.

This scan builds on the work completed in Adult Learning Australia's previous ACE scans (2014; 2015; 2016; 2017, 2020).

Unfortunately, comprehensive analysis of ACE is limited by the lack of complete data on all the work ACE does.

Key findings

ACE organisations are not for profit providers of accessible learning opportunities for adults. ACE also offers vital links across educational settings, workplaces and communities.

There are three main program focusses for ACE:

1 Personal enrichment

2 Foundation

3 Vocational

All ACE providers deliver enrichment programs. Most offer adult basic education in language, literacy, numeracy, digital and other foundation skills. An increasingly diminishing number, around 220, also offer formal vocational education and training (VET). ACE providers that offer formal VET continue to be largely concentrated in Victoria and NSW.

State and territory governments define and support ACE in different ways. But government funded ACE programs are now largely focussed on vocational outcomes.

Enrichment and development

Personal interest or enrichment programs offer many adults pathways back into learning by supporting social inclusion and impacting positively on health and wellbeing. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1.2 million Australians participated in structured personal interest learning from all sources (ABS 2022). However, it is conservatively estimated that at least 200,000 adults participate in personal interest learning through ACE each year.

ACE personal enrichment programs include cooking and gardening classes, creative pursuits, general education and health and wellbeing programs. They provide opportunities to learn new skills, interact with others socially, build confidence and can lead to further learning and training outcomes. Many programs support healthy and productive ageing, which is a key government policy area and a sustainable development goal (SDG4).

Funding personal enrichment learning for low income learners continues to be a major challenge for ACE providers.

Foundation

ACE basic adult education programs are aimed at adults with limited formal education or English language skills. These programs address language, literacy, numeracy, basic digital and job skills as well as other capabilities such as communication, problem solving, presentation and self-management. These programs (both non-accredited and accredited) are offered with high levels of support.

Non-accredited

National data on non-accredited adult basic education programs delivered by ACE providers is not collected. This is a significant barrier to building a complete picture of ACE. One study (Dymock, 2007) showed that thousands of Australian adults participate in non-accredited adult basic education programs to improve their self-confidence and capacity to interact with the wider community. The study also showed that improved literacy led to further training or employment outcomes. Dymock identified strong continuing demand for non-accredited community-based language, literacy and numeracy courses, and suggested this should be acknowledged through funding support. This scan includes some data on government funded non-accredited foundational programs in some states.

Accredited

VET outcomes are reported within the National VET Provider Collection managed by the NCVER. NCVER publish two VET outcomes datasets:

1. Government-funded VET
2. Total VET Activity (reported commenced 2015).

Government-funded VET reports outcomes on all VET activity delivered by government providers. However, TAFE outcomes include domestic fee for service but government-funded VET activity delivered by community education and private providers, does not include fee-for-service.

Total VET Activity (TVA) reports on government-funded VET and domestic fee for service VET at TAFE, university, community education providers (ACE) and private providers. There are differences in the reporting scope between these two collections. Non-accredited training activity (which is a significant proportion of ACE provision in the government-funded collection) is out of scope in TVA, but some data is included in the government-funded collection.

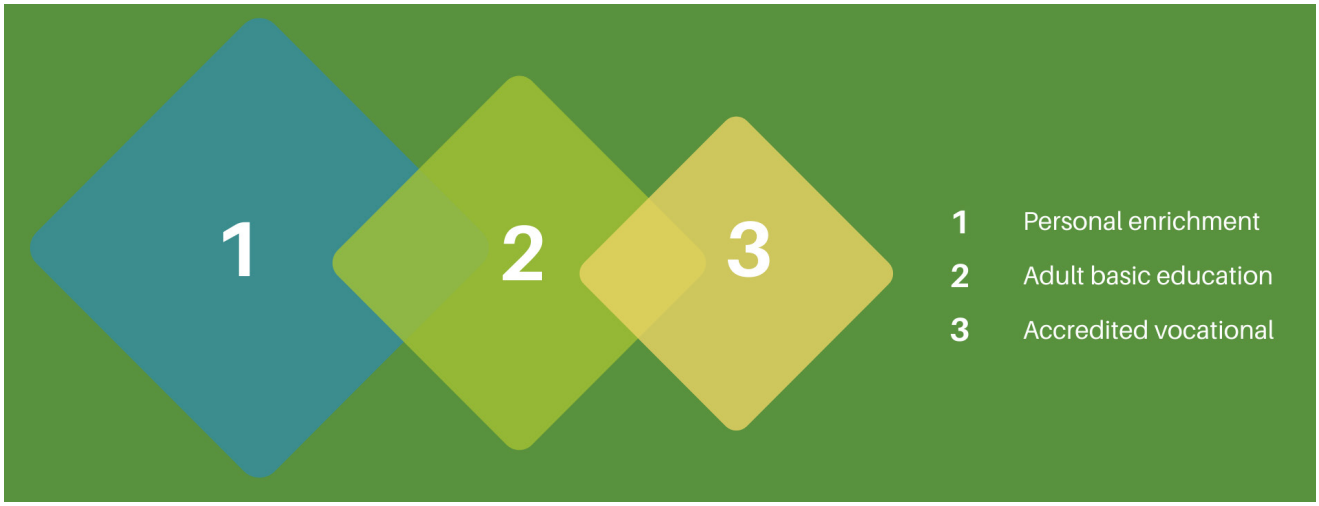
In 2020, there were 9.4K (refer Table 2) program enrolments in government-funded adult basic education programs at ACE RTOs / community education providers (identified using AVETMISS Field of Education (FOE) 12 Mixed Field Programs). This accounts for 6% of program enrolments, and includes the highest percentage of enrolments by many equity groups including:

- people who are unemployed
- people with a disability
- people non-English speaking backgrounds.

Over 15 years, (2003–2020), program enrolments in government-funded accredited basic adult education have more than halved. Whilst the impact of COVID was significant in 2020, subject enrolments in accredited programs have declined from 101K in 2012 to just 43K in 2020 (refer Table 3).

There were 13.1K TVA program enrolments in adult basic education programs at ACE RTOs in 2020, representing 9% of the total.

Figure 1: ACE program areas



ACE providers require increased support to respond to Australia's significant literacy challenge. Identifying effective interventions in adult literacy education for disadvantaged learners in ACE settings is an important first step.

Flexible and tailored delivery of foundation skills or LLND training is key for adults very low LLND levels – both with and without a vocational context.

Vocational

In 2020, 386,400 students were enrolled in nationally recognised training through ACE providers. Fifty-four per cent of program enrolments at ACE providers in government-funded VET were students from Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) quintile 1 (the most disadvantaged) and SEIFA quintile 2, which is around 10% higher than TAFE and provider providers.

For government-funded ACE VET program enrolments in 2020 (where ACE providers often achieve equivalent or better outcomes):

- 38% regional and remote areas
- 41% unemployed
- 20% disability
- 32% language other than English spoken at home.

According to NCVER, in 2018 there were 34,850 program enrolments in government-funded VET programs at ACE providers, accounting for 2.5% of the total enrolments – and 25,490 or 1.9% excluding basic adult education FOE12.

In 2020, there were 82,560 TVA program enrolments through ACE providers, accounting for 3.1% of total program enrolments – and 69,400 excluding basic adult education FOE 12, or 2.6%.

The number of government-funded ACE program enrolments in accredited VET, excluding adult basic education, has almost halved since 2012 (refer Table 7 and 8).

The number of TVA ACE program enrolments in 2020 declined to 2015 levels (refer Table 7a and 8a).

Government-funded ACE program enrolments in accredited VET, other than adult basic education, include most equity groups at higher levels than other providers. 2020 graduate student outcomes are comparable with other training providers and particularly strong in the areas of teacher quality and overall satisfaction with training (refer Table 12).

Data in this scan indicates that ACE providers achieve significant results, particularly given the cohorts they are working with and the limited resources they have available to support vulnerable learners.

To reverse the unintended adverse effects of competitive funding models on ACE providers and the vulnerable learners they serve, government needs to outline specific and complementary roles for the public TAFE system, not for profit community providers and private for profit providers that build on their strengths. A national community social service obligation fund and quarantining of some foundation skills funding for community and public providers should be provided to better support adults with high needs.

Non-registerered training organisation (RTO) ACE providers also support formal VET delivery by entering into partnerships with RTOs that take responsibility for assuring the quality of assessments; making judgements about competence or outcomes achieved and issuing awards.

Partnering, rather than competing, is proving a useful model to achieve equity in VET.

ACE organisations provide support and strong pathways from non-formal learning programs into formal VET programs. Research shows that supported learning pathways are best for adults with low language, literacy, numeracy and digital (LLND) skills, a lack of formal education or those who have had poor experiences of formal education.

The available data on actual transitions made by students at ACE providers from non-formal learning programs into formal VET programs reveals their high capacity to perform a 'pathway' role. Victoria data from Deloittes (2017) indicates that learners who attend an ACE RTO have higher transition rates than ACE organisations that are not RTOs. However, the number of ACE RTOs continues to decline in the face of policy shifts that undermine their viability.

Strengthening and supporting partnerships between ACE and VET providers and providing signficant support for ACE RTOs would increase vocational learning and build lifelong learning and foundation skills in local community settings.

A key way to support partnerships between ACE and VET providers would be to develop a detailed and coherent strategy on stackable micro-credentials or skillsets that are standalone or that could be aggregated to achieve an award over time to pathway learners from non-accredited into accredited learning programs. This process could be started by trialling a regional planning approach that would enable greater coordination and collaboration between the VET and ACE sectors, and industry.

> ‘[S]mall providers often see themselves as working with individuals not suited to a TAFE environment. This is especially true of higher-need learners, who require close support and attention.’
>
> (Lamb et al, 2018, p. 47).

The ACE sector achieves strong outcomes in many policy areas that extend beyond education; for example in health, human services, employment, industry and business and community and regional development (Victorian Govt 2019; ANCHA, 2011). Cross-departmental collaboration is critical to build on the potential and current capability of ACE providers across Australia.

Report structure

This report builds on a framework developed in previous ACE scan’s (ALA, 2017; 2018, 2020) for reporting on ACE education programs in Australia. However, the time series data in this report completely replaces previous ACE scans (ALA, 2017; 2018, 2020) due to NCVER’s changing data extraction methodology. This update contains consistent time series data from two NCVER collections: government-funded and Total VET.

> ACE continues to plays an important role in educating many adult Australians; particularly disadvantaged adults. However, data on the impact of non-accredited ACE programs must be collected to develop a strong evidence base.
>
> The sector needs ongoing support across governmental policy areas from both state and federal governments to sustain its work and fully achieve its potential.

To create a broader profile of ACE in Australia, data must be collected from a range of sources. This ACE scan update covers the following areas:

1. An overview of ACE in Australia in terms of its activities and providers
2. ACE provision by state, territory and national perspectives
3. ACE programs, including key features and data on the participants, outcomes and national policies supported
4. A new data framework to draw conclusions on where to next for Australian ACE
5. Trends over time to identify issues affecting the sustainability of ACE.

Recommendations

The ACE sector demonstrably serves important social and economic needs within communities across Australia for the ongoing education of adults. Yet, it lacks broad recognition, financial support and connections with local, state and federal governments, and this impedes its capacity to achieve these important goals.

This is becoming increasingly important in a nation that is facing expected as well as unexpected disruptions such as technological change, pandemics, natural disasters and the ageing of our population. Despite these disruptions, we need and expect Australians to continue to learn, be educated and engaged in productive activities within their communities.

For ACE to achieve its full potential, the following actions are recommended:

- A renewed national Ministerial Declaration is required to:
  - recognise ACE as a significant contributor in both accredited VET and non-accredited education by all state and territory governments
  - achieve national social and economic goals through programs that target educational disadvantage.
- Trial a regional planning approach to improve participation and success in VET for disadvantaged learners and to allow for greater coordination and collaboration between the TAFE and ACE sectors, and industry.
- ACE must be supported with infrastructure and resources to sustain a volunteer workforce, such as that extended to Lifesavers and volunteer firefighters.
- Research must be commissioned to capture and map the educational needs of adult Australians, their alignments with existing ACE provisions and providers, and to identify how best education programs for these adults should be organised, enacted and evaluated.

History of ACE

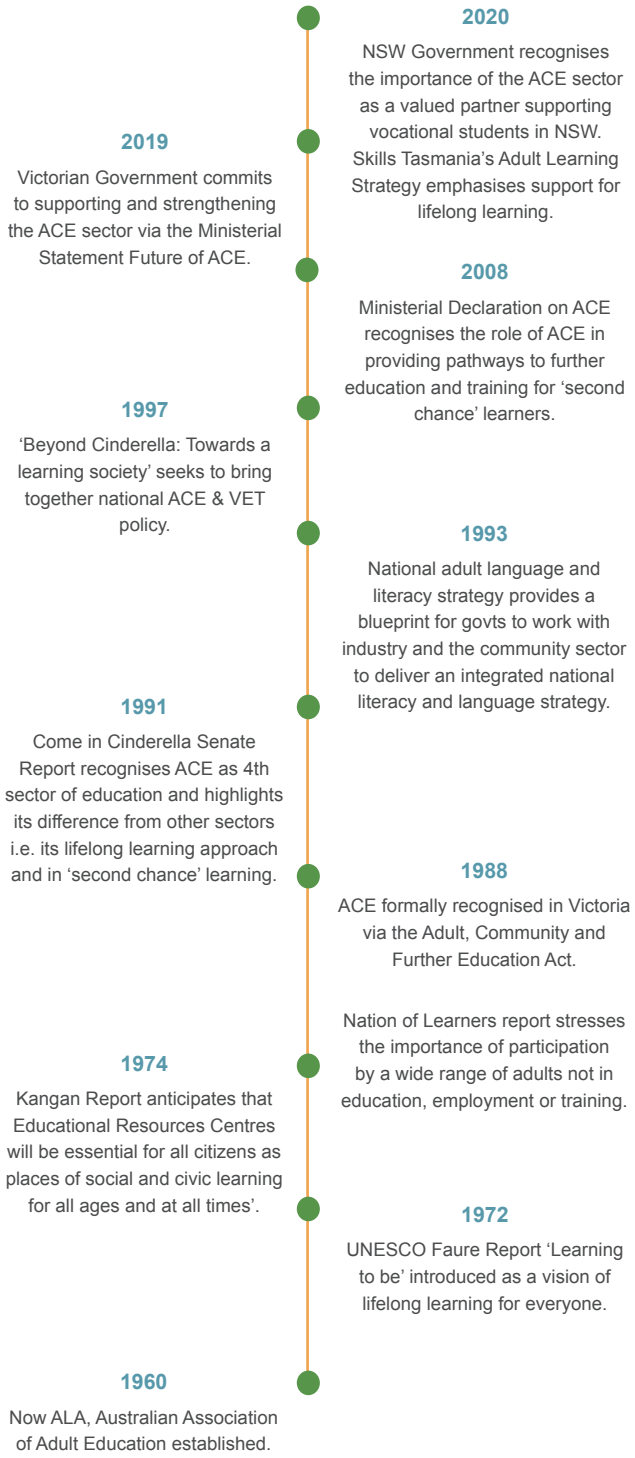
Adult community education can be traced back to the late 1880s, when it was established to provide education options for ordinary working age Australians. ACE organisations, such as Mechanics Institutes, offered lectures and courses on a wide range of topics disseminating new ideas and stimulating debate (SSCEET, 1991).

As formal education was established in Australia, ACE developed alongside and outside of the three formal education sectors to provide informal learning for adults through their participation in social activities and through non-formal structured learning programs. In the early 1990s the work of ACE received national recognition through the 'Come in Cinderella' report on ACE (SSCEET, 1991), which identified ACE as a 'potent education and training network that needed to be capitalised on nationwide (SSCEET, 1991, p. 157). National policy statements on ACE followed.

The Commonwealth, states and territories and ministers with responsibility for education endorsed the first national Ministerial Declaration on ACE in 1993 (MCEETYA, 1993) and have endorsed updated statements in 1997, 2002 and 2008 to accommodate changes in the education and training environment. Early Declarations expressed commitments to the value of ACE in developing social capital, building community capacity, encouraging social participation and cohesion. Later Declarations extended beyond these areas to its potential to respond to changed industrial, demographic and technological circumstances. The Declaration encouraged a collaborative approach to ACE to allow the sector to make a greater contribution to COAG's (now National Cabinet's) productivity agenda for skills and workforce development. It also identified ACE as a key player in the federal government's response to a social inclusion policy agenda. The 2008 Ministerial Declaration called for ACE to become more vocationally orientated. ACE would serve a value-adding role in VET by bringing in its distinctive qualities; particularly to assist educationally disadvantaged adults into and through the VET system (Schofield & Associates, 1996).

There have been significant changes in the education and training environment since 2008 but no updated national Ministerial Declaration on ACE. Some jurisdictions have committed to ACE via a Ministerial Statement or policy statement (refer ACE around Aust).

Figure 2: 60 years of adult community education



(Source: https://ala.asn.au/ala-60-years)

What is ACE?

Adult community education has distinctive values and learning practice.

Local

ACE's starting point is about providing learning opportunities that meet the needs of adults in local communities, and to build local capacity for community development. ACE takes a strong advocacy role to ensure local learning needs are met. The sector is an enabler of inclusive learning.

Inclusive

ACE has a welcoming, caring and non-judgmental culture and offers learning programs in friendly, community settings that cater for adults of varying abilities and backgrounds. ACE is a gateway for all adults to return to learning at any stage along the learning time line no matter their age, gender, culture, ability or previous educational experience or attainment. ACE starts where the learner is at, providing learning programs that build on their existing skills and knowledge and delivering desired new knowledge and skills and other outcomes, including motivation to go on to bigger and better things. Townsend (2006) argued that ACE has the capacity to build and connect communities; decrease social isolation; extend community networks and build social capital. It is recognised for its work with vulnerable learners using inclusive pedagogy and practice with learners who have had prior negative experience of learning (Ollis et al, 2017). In addition, ACE offers learning opportunities to learners across a lifespan including older adults (Ollis, et al, 2018).

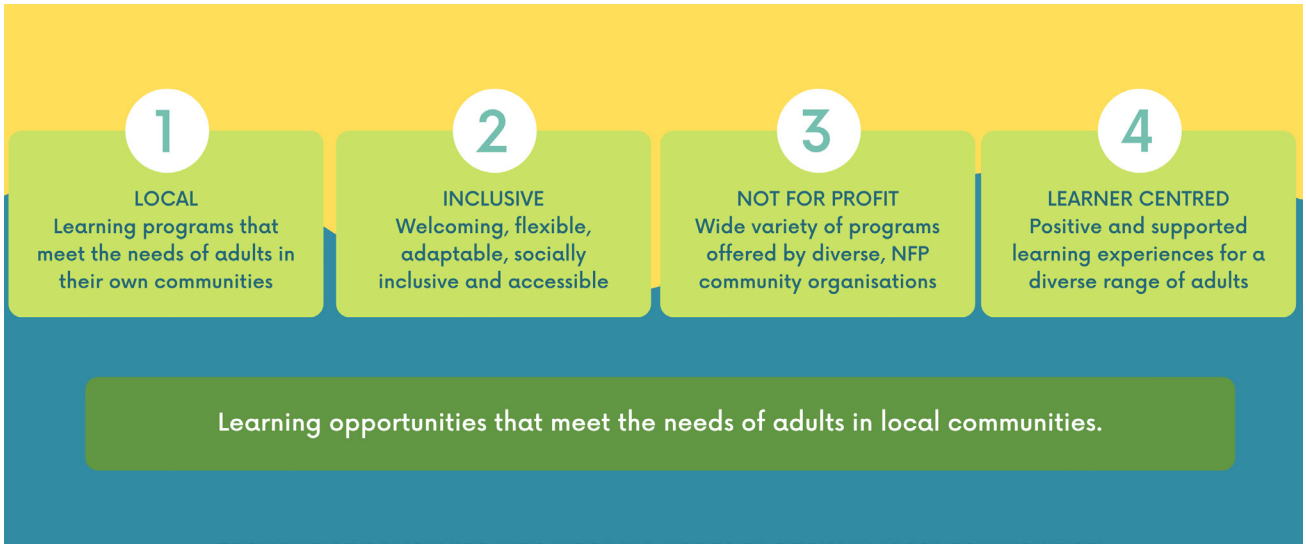
Learner-centred

ACE recognises that there is no 'traditional student', only a spectrum of learners with needs and preferences to be taken into account in learner-responsive pedagogical design. ACE is about learning approaches that engage adults in the process and foster personal, social and intellectual development. ACE uses adult learning principles that encourage learners to take ownership of their learning through active participation; hands-on learning and real-time demonstration of skills. Co-learning through shared tasks features as well as appraising their experiences and changes in their own perceptions, goals, confidences and motivations for learning in the future (Sanguinetti, Waterhouse, & Maunders, 2004).

Not for profit

ACE providers are community owned and managed, not for profit organisations that have adult education as a primary focus. While there are numerous other community-owned and managed organisations that deliver some adult education within their primary service orientation – such as rural fire brigades, sporting clubs, churches and Landcare organisations, as well as health, migrant, women and aged care centres – these are not usually identified as ACE providers.

Figure 3: Distinctive features of ACE

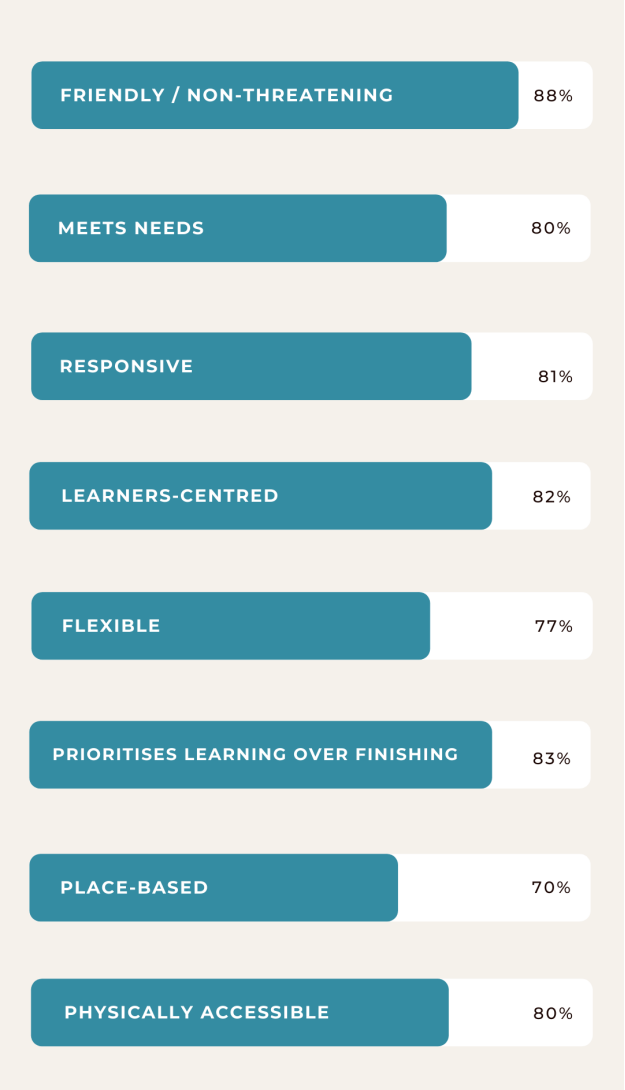


ACE providers are highly networked within their local communities; particularly with human services providers.

Through their partnerships, ACE providers access their clients and/or facilitate referrals for their clients to ensure appropriate support services are combined with their adult learning provision. Their partnerships strengthen the capacity of the local community to lead place-based, community development.

Volunteering is also an important activity for ACE providers because it aids low cost service provision. Involvement in volunteering can be a stepping stone to other work opportunities. It has both strong economic and development benefits, with the National Accounts (2012–13) identifying that not-for-profit volunteering had 'an imputed value of $17.3 billion' (Volunteering Australia, 2021, p. 19).

Figure 4: The strengths of ACE as identified by ACE learners



(Adapted from Saunders, 2001, Table 9 & 10, pp. 30–31)

The distinctive features of ACE are recognised by ACE participants as key strengths. To illustrate this point, 373 ACE VET learners in NSW were asked to rate the significance of commonly referred to 'strengths of ACE'. The magnitude of the percentages confirms the perceptions of these features as strengths of ACE (refer Figure 4).

In Dymock's research, the perceived strengths of ACE as identified by educators and learners, closely matched Saunders findings (2001).

A report (Golding, Davies & Volkoff, 2001) that consolidated key findings in ACE research identified these key attributes:

> 'ACE is held together in its diversity by its commitment to, and ownership by the community, as well as by its distinctive approaches to adult learning with a central focus on the learners and their needs.
>
> ACE is ... based around the learning needs of adults in local, neighbourhood or regional communities.'
>
> (Golding, Davies & Volkoff, 2001, p. 5)

Golding et al's research also indicated that 'over 3% of Australia's adult population participate in ACE' (around 592 000 individuals in 2001). This only reports activity in the national VET statistical collection maintained by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

Significantly more ACE activity 'takes place but goes unreported—because some programs are not formally recognised or are located in organisations that are not recognised providers or part of a recognised network or sector' (Golding, et al 2001).

Rooney (2011) found that ACE has the capability and freedom to 're-shape' itself, while retaining particular values such as offering a broad range of locally focussed adult education programs that have a significant impact on individuals and communities but are not well 'captured by the mechanisms that report on adult community education'.

ACE activities

Historically, ACE primarily delivered hobby and personal enrichment learning programs. This changed around four decades ago.

> 'First came the introduction of adult basic education in ACE courses designed to provide basic language and living skills to help people participate in and contribute to society. As it became apparent that students were applying adult and community education skills to employment, the sector began to offer specific vocational education and training courses, creating "VET ACE"'
>
> (Walstab, Volkoff & Teese, 2005, p. 17)

Today, Australian ACE delivers in four key areas:

1. Personal enrichment informal and non-formal learning activities – the traditional focus of ACE
2. Adult basic education (e.g. LLND) non-formal and formal – a common focus
3. Formal vocational education and training – an additional focus for some ACE providers in line with the latest Ministerial Declaration on ACE
4. Pathways from one type of learning program to another, and from non-formal learning to formal learning for vocational purposes – a focus in line with the latest Ministerial Declaration on ACE.

The position of ACE within the Australian education landscape has changed (see Figure 5). Today ACE delivers formal training inside the VET sector (that includes the school aged) to contribute to work skills and economic development, as well as adult basic education for both life and work purposes and personal enrichment development programs.

Australian ACE provides a nexus between adult education and community development and adult education and economic development (see Figure 6).

ACE offers a bridge between social inclusion and workforce and productivity agendas. However, capability across providers varies (Bowman, 2011) due largely to a lack of investment in sector capacity building.

This report primarily focusses on the three economic roles of ACE as providers of education: platform builders, bridge builders and work skills developers.

ACE providers

ACE providers are a disparate group that go by various names including: neighbourhood house, community centre, community shed, University of the Third Age, community college and various other names.

We do not know precisely how many ACE providers there are in Australia as there is no single registration arrangement for ACE providers. We do know the ballpark number of ACE providers by the following key sub-types and the key activities of ACE they focus on.

Neighbourhood Houses and Community Learning Centres

There are approximately 1000 Neighbourhood Houses and Centres nationally according to the results of the first national survey of Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres (NH&Cs) undertaken in late 2010/ early 2011 (ANHCA 2011).

The NH&Cs are located in metropolitan areas (47%), regional centres or large county towns (26%) and in rural/remote areas (27%).

The 2011 National NH&C Survey Report gives a breakdown of the range of programs and activities

Figure 5: The position of ACE within the Australian education landscape – historically and now

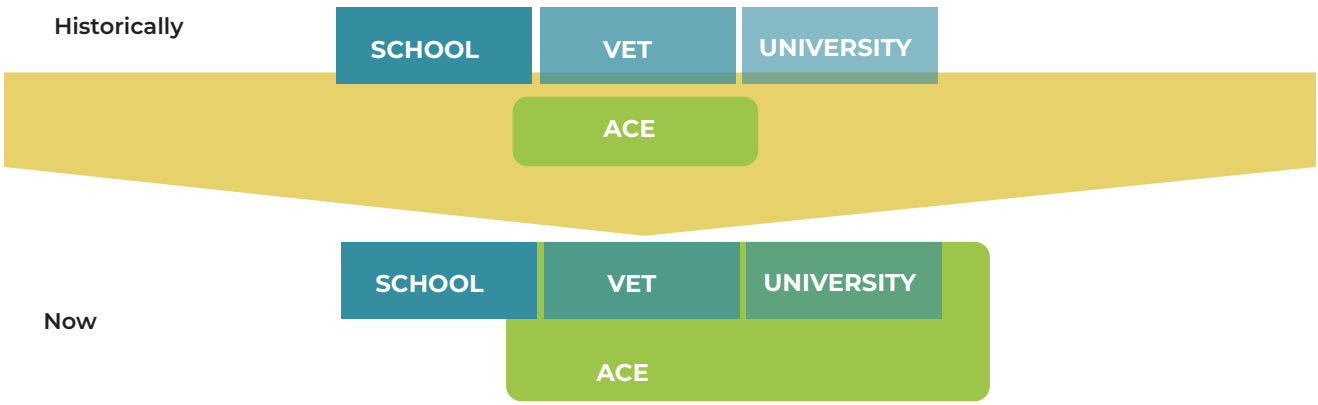
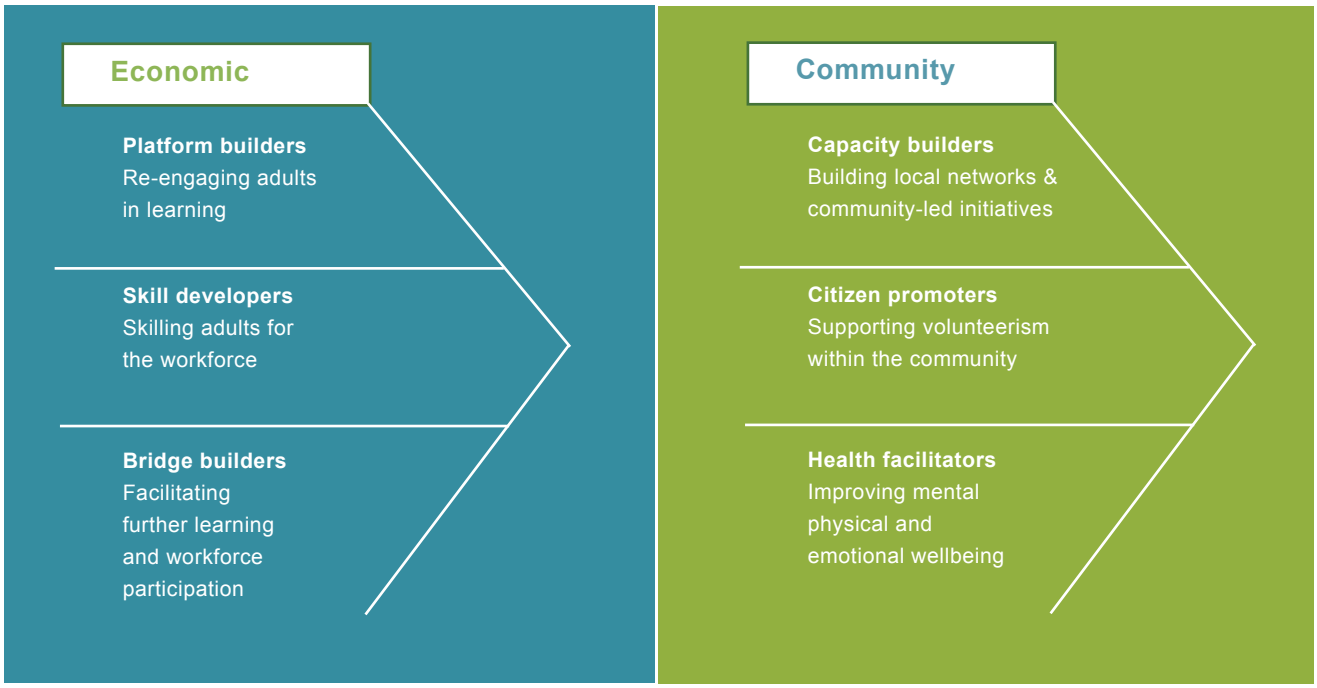


Figure 6: Contemporary roles of ACE providers



(Source: Adapted from Bowman 2006 by Allen Consulting)

provided by NH&Cs in order of popularity. It shows that NH&Cs provide an extensive variety of services and activities in their communities:

- Information and referral were the most popular activities (92%) then community development (80%)
- Recreation and leisure, art and craft, health and wellbeing courses came in next (70–80%)
- Public computer/internet access, self-help groups, student work placements, personal development courses and volunteer community services (60–65%)
- Pre- or non-accredited adult education and training and literacy programs were a priority focus for between 40–45% of the NH&Cs
- Accredited training adult education and vocational training courses was also a focus for just under 30%.

NH&C's provide opportunities for social inclusion and learning through formal and informal education programs that are developed for people with diverse life experiences.

'Participants are generally on low incomes, socially isolated or at risk of social isolation, and with low levels of formal education. Consequently, the courses offered are widely varied, reflecting the demographics of the local community and local needs and interests.'

(Ollis et al. 2017)

Most NH&Cs remain focussed on personal enrichment learning and adult basic education. With a minority extending into formal (VET) as well. The 2011 national survey of NH&Cs indicates that women are the predominant users of NH&Cs, with those aged between the ages of 45–64 most highly represented (ANHCA 2011 p. 11). However, the number of male participants in ACE has increased markedly in recent years. A stimulus to higher rates of male participation has been the offer by NH&Cs of computer classes, foundation skills classes and skills development classes. Skill development programs have been particularly valuable in boosting participation rates of males (SA Centre for Economic Studies, 2013).

ACE registered training organisations

Formal vocational education and training (VET) is an additional focus for some ACE providers including some NH&Cs, all Community Colleges (in NSW and Vic) and a segment of ACE providers (many of which are also Learn Local providers) in Victoria. To be a provider of formal VET, an organisation must meet the standards for RTOs. The number of RTOs with registration type 'community based adult education provider' as at the 1st of January 2021 was 218 according to training.gov.au – the official national register on VET in Australia and authoritative source of information on RTOs, training packages, qualifications, accredited courses, units of competency, skill sets, etc. Since 2005, the total number of ACE RTOs recorded by training.gov.au have significantly decreased (by 56%).

Figure 7 shows a sharp decline in ACE RTOs in 2006. The numbers stabilised until 2011 when there was another sharp decline and while reasons for this decline can only be speculated, the creation of the national quality assurance agency for VET – the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) around mid-2011 may have caused some attrition. Initial incorrect classification and then reclassification is another possible reason. Indeed an historical report on ACE RTOs (training.gov.au, 2016) shows 44 reclassifications from ACE RTOs to other categories of RTO. The earliest incidence of this happening was mid-2011. Overall there has been a progressive decline in total RTO numbers which has been attributed by ASQA to 'changing market circumstances as well as regulatory action'. Due to the large numbers of total RTOs with narrow scopes or who are not currently delivering training this decline may continue.

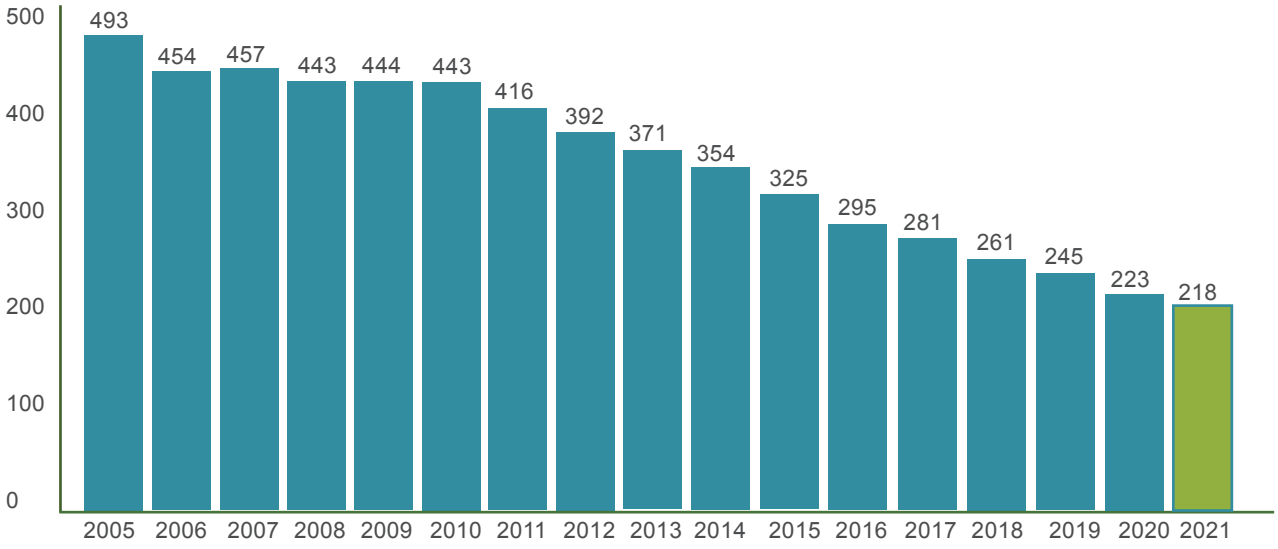
Also ACE RTOs have been amalgamating to adopt more sustainable business models in response to changes in VET policy and towards more competitive training markets in which all RTOs compete for the available government funds. For example, ACE RTOs in NSW, known as Community Colleges, have reduced from 70 over a decade ago to around 34 today through mergers, re-alignment of service focus and closures.

Small discrepancies still exist between the point-in-time numbers of ACE RTOs in the national register for VET (training.gov.au) and the numbers of ACE RTOs reported as delivering government-funded VET in any one year by the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER), who manage national VET data collections. For example, in 2020 according to training.gov.au there were 218 ACE RTOs (refer Figure 7) whereas the NCVER reported 315 ACE RTOs delivering government funded VET and 205 Total VET (refer Table 1 & 1a).

The definitions in the NCVER managed National VET Provider Collection specifications for the Training Organisation Type Identifiers are broad enough that organisations may identify themselves incorrectly, skewing the numbers (ALA, 2015, p. 6).

NCVER has indicated that there are two key reasons why ACE providers are higher in government-funded collection, compared to the total VET activity (TVA) collections.

Figure 7: Numbers of ACE RTOs at January 1 each year (2005–2021)



(Source: Data request training.gov.au 2021)

1. There are differences in the reporting scope between the two collections. Non-RTOs and non-accredited training activity (which make up a significant proportion of the ACE providers in the government-funded collection) are out of scope for reporting in total VET activity, but included in the government-funded collection.
2. SA (up to 2016) and NSW have separate data submissions for ACE training in the government-funded collection. Training submitted by SA and NSW is reported as being delivered by community education providers, irrespective of the training provider identifier.

In summary the best we can say about the number of ACE providers that are also RTOs or formal VET providers, is that there are somewhere between 200–400 providers.

What we can say with certainty is that the number of community-based RTOs delivering accredited programs around Australia has declined significantly over the past decade.

Universities of the Third Age

U3A's offer non-formal, personal interest learning programs – academic, cultural, physical and social – to older Australians. These programs offer stimulation and development to people in active retirement. They meet the needs of their members through a peer-learning model. All tutors are volunteers who come from U3A groups across Australia. Learning is pursued without reference to criteria, qualifications, assessments or rewards. There are 297 national and 36 international sites (U3A Online website: U3A sites listed, November 2019).

Community sheds

Men's Sheds originated in Australia in the 1990s to provide a space for constructive and social activity, informal and non-formal adult education, as well as offering a place to make friends and regain a sense of purpose. The exact number of community sheds is unclear. Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA) has approximately 950 member Sheds, but there are somewhere between around 1000–1200 Men's Sheds across Australia (Siggins Miller, 2016; Golding 2021). Men's Sheds have boosted the number of males participating in ACE. Some Sheds are associated with NH&Cs while others are independent. A total of 55% of Shed members live in regional Australia (AMSA, 2011).

In the past decade, around 61 women's sheds have emerged in Australia concentrated largely in QLD, NSW and Victoria (Golding, 2021).


2019
BEST
AMERICAN
SHORT
STORIES
ANTHONY DOERR

ACE around Australia

ACE is diverse and tailored to local communities. It is influenced by state and territory governments who have primary responsibility for ACE. There are significant differences in how each jurisdiction views and funds ACE.

Australian Capital Territory

ACT ACE has been funded through a grants program since 1998. These grants allow not for profit community education providers to deliver foundation skills training to 'Canberrans with barriers to learning, training and work to meet their needs and aspirations'. Expected outcomes are 'increased participation in work-related foundation skills training or transitioning to training, employment or volunteering'. TAFEs, private RTOs and universities do not have access to ACE grants. Grants are up to $50,000 for individual projects and $100,000 for joint projects. The grants program includes accredited and non-accredited foundation skills programs focussed on 'individual empowerment and development' as well as pathway programs for people aged 17+. ACE providers that are not RTOs can deliver ACE accredited training through an auspicing arrangement with an RTO.

Foundation skills are 'employability/work-ready skills, work experience, and learning, reading, writing, oral communication, numeracy, digital technology, problem solving and teamwork capabilities'. Non-accredited projects are based on FSK Training Package and must show a pathway from non-accredited modules to accredited units of competency. Accredited projects can use any relevant units from the FSK Training Package or industry-specific units from Certificate I, II or III level qualifications (skills.act.gov.au).

There are 16 neighbourhood houses and community learning centres in the ACT. Tuggeranong Link manages 5 of these. There are also 9 community-based RTOs (training.gov.au, 2021) delivering VET.

Community centres and neighbourhood houses 16

Community-based registered training organisations 9

Public libraries 10

Mens Sheds 25

University of the Third Age 1

Numbers are indicative only due to incomplete and changing data sources. Community-based RTO data from training.gov.au January 2021)

New South Wales

NSW ACE is made up of a relatively uniform network of providers that identify as community colleges. NSW community colleges are independent but supported through grants from Training Services NSW.

There are 33 preferred ACE providers that are subsidised by the NSW Government to deliver ACE programs. Preferred providers largely consist of ACE community colleges, Workers Education Associations and other not for profit adult education providers.

ACE programs in NSW offer inclusive and affordable training and education that builds 'adaptable and resilient learning communities; offers opportunities for lifelong learning and builds 'a skilled workforce that contributes to regional economic development' (training.nsw.gov.au).

ACE programs support people with barriers to participating in mainstream VET. Funded programs are designed to meets workplace needs; especially with regard to English language, literacy, numeracy, digital literacy and employability skills.

Dedicated infrastructure funding up to $50K is also available to ACE providers in recognition of their work with disadvantaged cohorts, especially in rural and regional areas.

In 2019, the NSW Government initiated a review of government funded ACE provision. This resulted in an ACE policy statement. The ACE policy statement identified ACE as a valued partner supporting both VET and lifelong pathways. An ACE sector strategy is currently in development.

There are 70 community-based RTOs (training.gov.au) with access to Smart and Skilled funding. Smart and Skilled provides eligible learners with subsidised training up to and including Certificate III, as well as funding for Certificate IV and above in priority areas. Only approved NSW ACE providers and TAFE NSW can deliver Smart and Skilled foundation skills training.

The Tech Savvy Seniors Program is also delivered by community colleges and libraries in various locations in NSW (training.nsw.gov.au). Additionally, there are 166 neighbourhood houses and community learning centres delivering diverse ACE learning and engagement programs supported by their peak body, the Local Community Services Association (lcsansw.org.au), alongside Men's Sheds and an active U3A movement operating from 62 sites (U3A Network). The 362 strong public libraries also offer other adult learning programs.

234 Community centres and neighbourhood houses

70 Community-based registered training organisations

362 Public libraries

392 Mens Sheds

62 University of the Third Age

Numbers are indicative only due to incomplete and changing data sources. Community-based RTO data from training.gov.au January 2021)

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory does not have a specific statement, policy or strategy for ACE or any direct application of government funding to the sector.

The Central Land Council in the NT manages six major community benefit projects, including the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust, established in 2005. Since that time, the trust has invested over $34M in five priority areas including learning community centres that support adult learning and literacy for work, life and wellbeing.

There are many other examples of community-based adult learning and family literacy programs, such as the Home Interaction Program for Parents & Youngsters (HIPPY), which exist across the Northern Territory in Indigenous community organisations, charitable organisations, public libraries, seniors centres, Working Women's Centres and U3As. The extent of this community education is not fully known nor reported.

The NT Government does offer Equity Training Grants targeted towards specific equity groups. The focus of these grants is to re-engage/engage Territorians in employment or further training programs.

Key equity groups targeted through this initiative include: people with a disability; parents returning to the workforce after an absence of five years or more; long-term unemployed migrants; refugees, mature-aged people; very long-term unemployed people, or those at risk of becoming very long-term unemployed. Equity Training Grants are available to incorporated organisations, schools and RTOs.

Funding is also available for pre-employment training programs that develop practical skills to help participants get a job, apprenticeship or traineeship. This funding is available to:

1. training providers
2. industry associations
3. community groups.

Programs that lead to employment in skills shortage areas or hard to fill jobs are prioritised.

Aboriginal Employment Programs includes Aboriginal Workforce Grants to maximise employment outcomes and Aboriginal Responsive Skilling Grants for training that leads to job outcomes including VET programs that 'cannot be funded through any other source' (skillingterritorians.nt.gov.au).

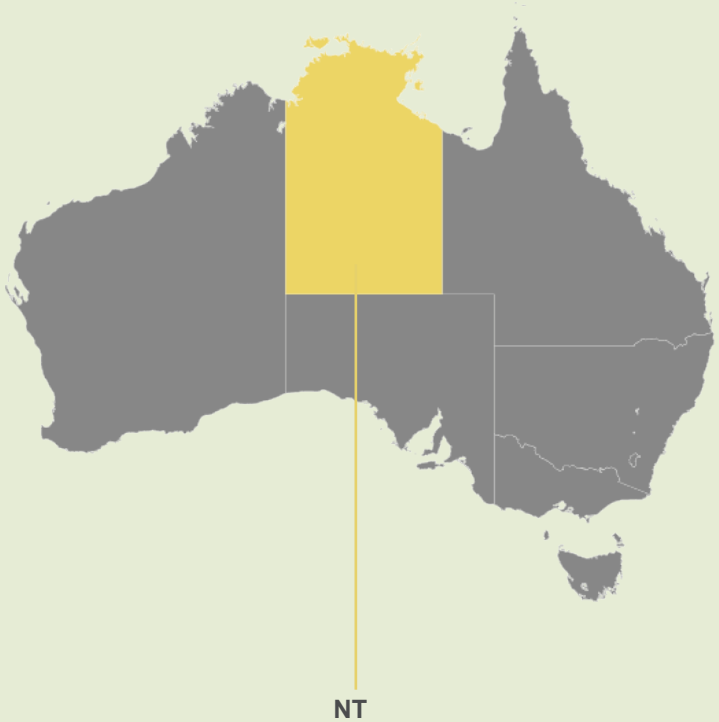
Community centres and neighbourhood houses 5

Community-based registered training organisations 4

Public libraries 31

Mens Sheds 8

University of the Third Age 3



Numbers are indicative only due to incomplete and changing data sources. Community-based RTO data from training.gov.au January 2021)

Queensland

In Qld, organisations self-identify for inclusion on a government list of ACE providers (desbt.qld.gov.au). Self-nominated ACE providers are diverse and include not-for-profit community organisations, university, TAFE, industry associations, community groups, community colleges and neighbourhood houses.

The Lifelong Learning Council Qld is the state peak body for adult learning.

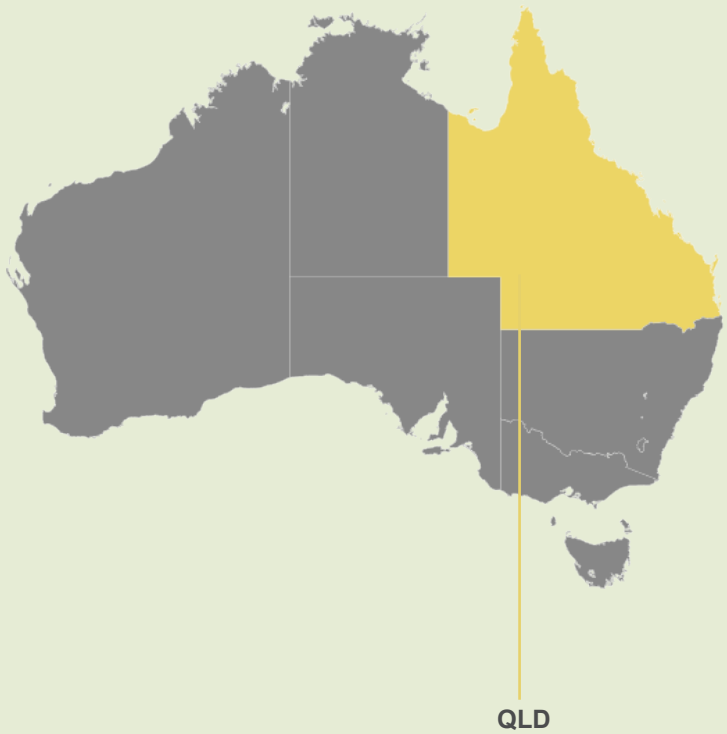
In Qld, the Certificate 3 Guarantee (C3G) offers eligible people access to subsidised training places, 'up to and including their first post-school certificate III qualification' (desbt.qld.gov.au). Foundation skills and lower-level vocational qualifications may also be delivered as part of this intiative. Under C3G foundation skills training is an enabling program that can be delivered through a indvidual unit, a module or full qualifications in accordance with the learner's needs.

'Skilling Queenslanders for Work' (SQW) is a Department of Employment, Small Business and Training initiative first introduced in 2015–16. In 2021, the Qld government committed a further $320 million to continue the initiative.

The SQW initiative includes tailored community-based and supported pathway programs for young and mature aged job seekers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability, women re-entering the workforce, Australian Defence Force veterans and ex-service members and people from culturally and linguistically diverse groups. SQW is supported by a regional network that works with and builds partnerships with community-based organisations and local employers to 'determine local skills and entry-level industry and labour needs' (DESBT, 2021). Many of these funded initiatives are delivered by community-based not-for-profit organisations.

SQW funds:

- Community Work Skills assists disadvantage job seekers to gain nationally recognised skills and qualifications
- Work Skills Traineeships – paid work placements on projects where participants undertake a work skills traineeship that integrates with on-the-job skills
- Ready for Work – 6–8 week basic job preparation and employability skills courses for unemployed youth



140 Community centres and neighbourhood houses

29 Community-based registered training organisations

321 Public libraries

242 Mens Sheds

34 University of the Third Age

Numbers are indicative only due to incomplete and changing data sources. Community-based RTO data from training.gov.au January 2021)

- Get Set for Work – intensive employment and training assistance targeting early school leavers and disadvantaged young people
- Youth Skills – supports 15–24 year olds with Youth Justice Services or QLD Corrective Services
- Work Start incentives – employer incentives for participants in other SQW programs
- First Start – subsidised traineeships for local government and community-based organisations.

ACE programs in QLD are delivered by a wide variety of organisations including:

- community owned or operated RTOs
- TAFE QLD
- school based parent and citizen associations
- professional associations, libraries and senior citizens associations
- specialist literacy groups and computer clubs
- University of the Third Age
- English conversation groups
- parenting associations and sporting clubs
- adult education organisations, community and neighbourhood houses
- job placement organisations and workplace learning programs
- volunteering programs, churches and spiritual groups
- special interest and environmental groups
- university extension and local governments
- men's sheds and drop-in centres
- community service organisations.

(www.qld.gov.au)

South Australia

In SA, ACE programs are funded by the Department for Innovation and Skills. ACE providers are identified as not-for-profit, community-based organisations that can demonstrate they have adult education and training as a key focus.

In 2021, the state peak body Community Centres SA (CCSA) was funded to develop a new approach to ACE delivery via a collaboration called 'Community Learning'.

Community Learning programs are designed to improve digital literacy, work skills and general literacy and numeracy in a range of local contexts.

Through the Community Learning initiative, CCSA has entered into a partnership with 10 diverse community-based adult education providers. The collaboration is designed to lift the quality of foundation skills training and to pool resources through a 'supportive network of leadership, infrastructure, and employment relationships' (communitycentressa.asn.au).

The Community Learning programs are free to eligible participants.

Another new partnership for non-accredited delivery is between the Salisbury, Playford and Port Adelaide Enfield local governments in SA. The objective of this partnership is to bridge the gap between basic work skills and finding employment.

The Northern Regional Consortium Employment Pathways Project (NRCEPP) offers fully-funded adult education programs that meet local needs. The project is funded by the Department for Innovation and Skills, and delivered through a wide range of community organisations – many of which are associated or attached to partner local government authorities.

NRCEPP focusses on basic numeracy, literacy and essential skills required for the workplace. Programs are offered across a variety of sites and also include online options (salisbury.sa.gov.au).

SA ACE also has an active fee-for-service delivery model alongside government funded ACE programs.

170	Community centres and neighbourhood houses
8	Community-based registered training organisations
156	Public libraries
87	Mens Sheds
21	University of the Third Age

Numbers are indicative only due to incomplete and changing data sources.

Tasmania

In 2020, the Tasmanian Government released its Adult Literacy Strategy, which provided a policy framework and funding for lifelong learning in Tasmania.

The Strategy offers an increase in funding of $4.36 million distributed over four years from 2020-21 (skills.tas.gov.au).

The Adult Literacy Strategy includes a $3M expansion of the 26TEN initiative, which links business, community groups, government, adult education and training providers through grant funding of between $5–$50K. The 26TEN grant funding supports initiatives that increase the literacy and numeracy of adult Tasmanians.

The Strategy also supports:

- the continuation of the Digital Ready for Daily Life program
- a phone referral service
- the Adult Literacy Fund.

Skills Tasmania offers grants to endorsed RTOs through its Adult Learning Fund. The Adult Learning Fund supports pathways to employment programs including skillsets training through to accredited qualifications.

The Adult Learning Fund includes Jobseeker and Pre-jobseeker streams. The Pre-jobseeker stream targets people with barriers that prevent them from accessing employment opportunities. These programs are delivered through employment providers and private RTOs as neighbourhood houses and community centres in Tasmania are not RTO and therefore do not offer accredited learning programs.

The Strategy outlined an annual Adult Learning Ministerial Forum for input and advice, as well as a review of Libraries Tasmania's adult learning programs and services. Libraries Tasmania offer and support a wide range of adult learning programs and activities through its service points across the state.

Independent community managed Online Access Centres, funded by a grants program, also exist across the state to support adults to navigate and use digital technology.

Other education programs are offered through Tasmania's 35 neighbourhood houses but these are largely fee for service, auspiced programs or contingent upon the house securing ad-hoc small grant funding.

Community centres and neighbourhood houses 35

Community-based registered training organisations 4

Public libraries 50

Mens Sheds 30

University of the Third Age 16

Victoria

The ACE sector in Victoria is the largest and oldest in Australia. In Victoria, the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board – a statutory authority under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 – funds ACE organisations (known as registered Learn Local providers) to deliver education and training programs that target people with limited prior access to education, including pre-accredited programs.

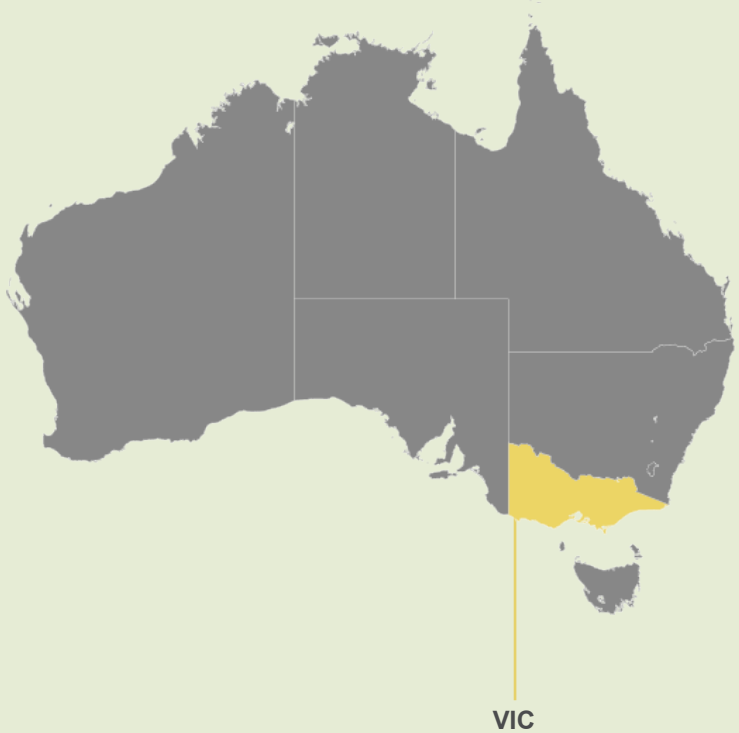
Pre-accredited programs are short modular courses that are primarily focussed on creating pathways for participants to further education and training or employment. Pre-accredited programs target:

- women seeking to re-enter the workforce after experiencing family violence
- early school leavers, both mature and youth
- low skilled and vulnerable workers
- Indigenous people
- unemployed and underemployed people
- people from CALD backgrounds
- disengaged young people
- people with a disability.

Learn Local providers are governed by voluntary committees of management whose members are drawn from the local community. They offer programs ranging from basic adult education through to diploma-level qualifications. Learn Local providers are a diverse group that includes community centres, community learning centres, community colleges and neighbourhood houses.

They also include training centres managed by large not-for-profit organisations such as Jesuit Social Services and a number of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) specialist providers such as Adult Multicultural Education Services. Adult education institution, the Centre for Adult Education also receive Learn Local funding.

In 2019, the Victorian Government released a Ministerial Statement on the Future of Adult Community Education 2020–2025. The Ministerial Statement recognised the ACE sector's 'strong record in engaging adults with low prior education and helping them progress to further education, training, and direct entry-level jobs. It also recognised the integral role adult community education plays within the post-secondary education system and its role in providing skills for work, further education and life.



400 Community centres and neighbourhood houses

82 Community-based registered training organisations

282 Public libraries

253 Mens Sheds

104 University of the Third Age

A 2017 Deloitte Access Economics released an analysis of adult community education training data in Victoria. This analysis found that 57% of learners engage in further training, of those who undertake pre-accredited training and transition to accredited training 78% complete and attain their accredited qualification (Ministerial Statement on the Future of ACE 2020–25).

A survey of pre-accredited learners found 'a significant uplift in employment after training – from 37% to 48% – among learners who undertook training for a work-related reason; and 80% in 2017 achieved their main reason for training (Pre-accredited Learner Survey 2018).

The ACFE Board continues to work within the strategic framework articulated in its 2020–25 Strategic Plan and the Ministerial Statement on the Future of Adult and Community Education in Victoria 2020–2025. The Board has renewed its commitment to leading literacy, numeracy, English language, employability and digital skills education and training for adult learners in Victoria.

The ACFE Board's 2025 Strategy Fund combines all investments that 'support projects and initiatives that target adult learners across Victoria'. Investments of this nature are now determined by the Board's annual work plan and primarily undertaken by the Learn Local sector. The 2025 Strategy Fund follows a review of projects including the Capacity and Innovation Fund.

The ACFE Board funded the training of:

- 19,126 Victorians through 250 contracted Learn Local providers in 2020
- 29,640 Victorians through 254 contracted Learn Local providers in 2019
- 29,940 Victorians through 263 contracted Learn Local providers in 2018

Learn Local providers include Victorian adult education institutions.

Learn Local RTOs also have access to VET funding. The Victorian Government introduced the Skills First Reform in 2017 to strength the government-funded VET system. Skills First's aim is to remove low quality providers, better align industry needs with training activity and make TAFE more sustainable.

The Reconnect program is another aspect of the Skills First initiative. Reconnect supports learners with barriers to learning to transition into the workforce. The program targets long-term unemployed adults between the ages of 20–64 who have not completed high school and young people aged 17–19 who are early school leavers.

Learn Local RTOs delivering the Reconnect program must undertake outreach and engagement activities to identify and attract disengaged, high-needs learners and developed a learning plan to transition participants to further training or employment.

Participants have access to support services and are assigned a Reconnect coach who assists them to identify educational or employment opportunities. This funding is only available to TAFE and Learn Local RTOs.

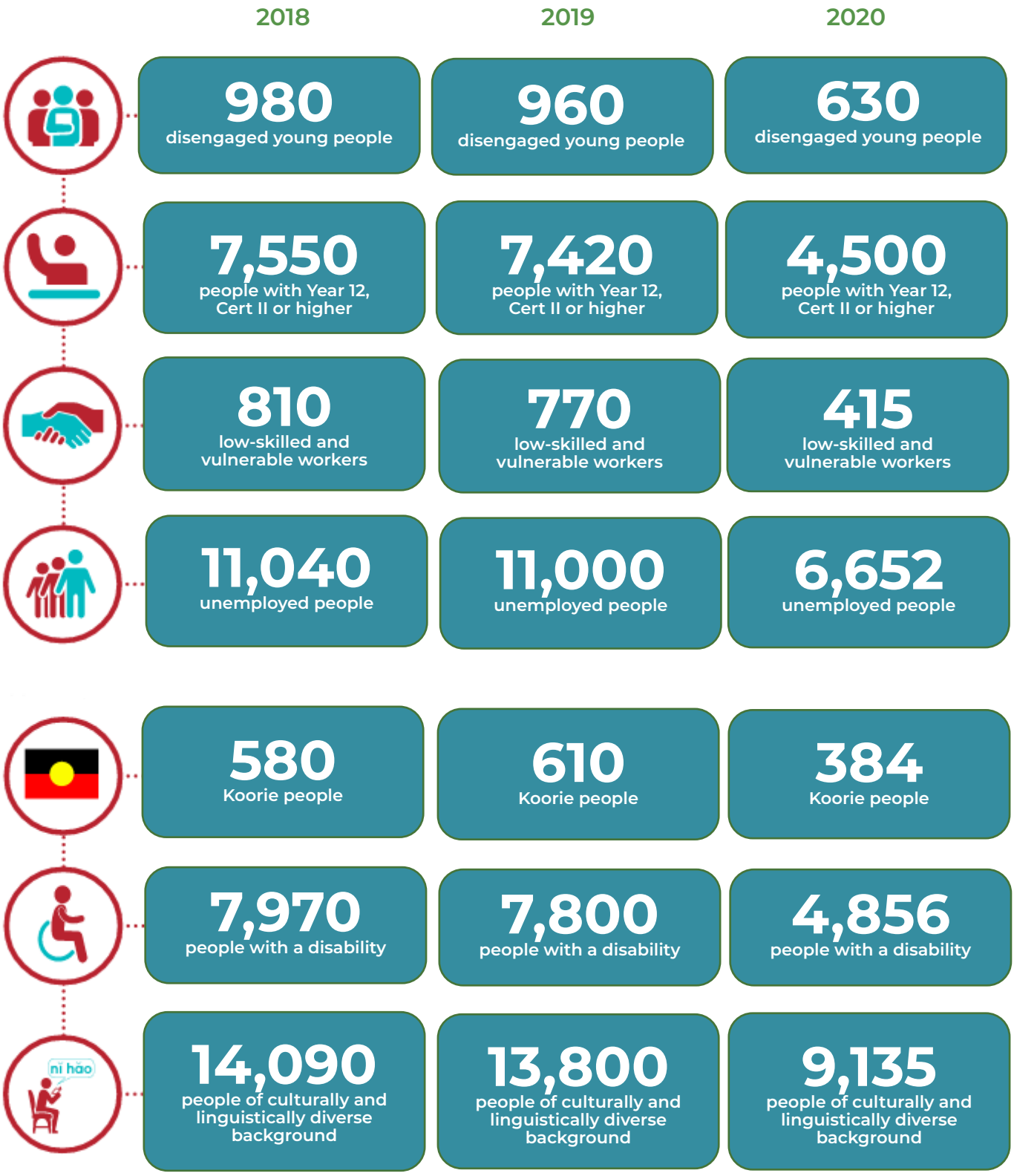
The Reconnect program prioritises the following groups:

- parents returning to work
- Indigenous Australians
- people with a disability
- people with low literacy and numeracy
- people who are physically isolated
- young mothers
- highly marginalised groups such as offenders, drug and alcohol dependents or homeless

It is important to recognise that not all Victorian ACE organisations are also Learn Local providers. The ACE sector in Victoria has a very active fee-for-service delivery model alongside other government funded ACE programs.

(Source: www.education.vic.gov.au/training/providers/learnlocal/Pages/funding.aspx)

Figure 8: Data from Victorian Government-funded adult community education training (2018, 2019, 2020)



(Source: hwww.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/department/Adult_Community_and_Further_Education_Board_Annual_Report_2020-21.pdf

Western Australia

In WA, the ACE sector is not clearly defined. Government-funded accredited training is delivered by registered training organisations registered with the Department of Training and Workforce Development (DTWD) as 'preferred providers', who are eligible to apply for competitively allocated funding.

To become a 'preferred provider', an RTO needs to demonstrate that they have the organisational (governance and financial) and operational capacity to meet the training needs of students and industry.

According to training.gov.au, there are 12 community-based RTOs in WA.

The Western Australian Community Resource Network (WACRN) includes more than 100 rural, remote and regional Community Resource Centres. CRCs are independently owned and operated, not-for-profit organisations – run by and in local communities.

CRCs are contracted by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) to 'provide access to government and community services and information, and to undertake community, business and economic development activities' (www.drd.wa.gov.au/projects/Community-and-Culture/Pages/Community-Resource-Centres-(CRCs).aspx).

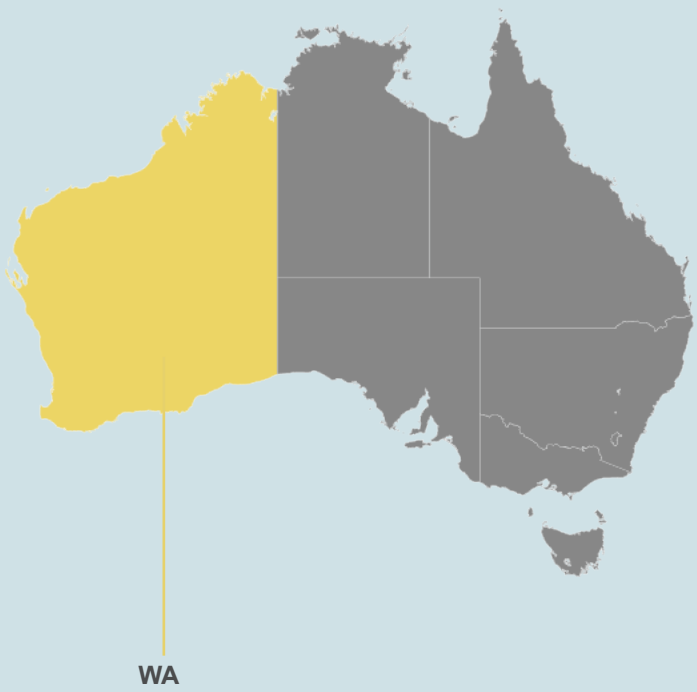
The WA government also supports skills development through the Regional Traineeship Program, which supports CRCs and eligible local government authorities (LGAs) to provide training, skills and employment opportunities in their local area. Applicants can access a maximum payment of $30,000 per trainee.

The WACRN is supported by DPIRD through funding from the State Government's Royalties for Regions program.

Adult literacy and numeracy support is provided through Read Write Now (RWN), which is a volunteer mentoring program funded by DTWD and sponsored by North Metropolitan TAFE. RWN tutors complete fours week of training so they can confidently assist adults. Over 600 volunteers work with RWN across metropolitan and regional WA.

Other ACE programs are funded on a case by case basis by individual LGAs and through a fee-for-service model. Funding for Linkwest, the state ACE peak body for 150 registered Community, Neighbourhood and Learning Centres ceased in 2015.

Community centres and neighbourhood houses	**16**
Community-based registered training organisations	**12**
Public libraries	**10**
Mens Sheds	**93**
University of the Third Age	**1**



Numbers are indicative only due to incomplete and changing data sources.

National

In 2019, the Victorian Government recognised the role of adult community education in providing accessible and tailored adult education opportunities through a Ministerial Statement and a six year reform agenda of the sector.

In 2020, the NSW Government released an ACE Policy Statement that recognised the capacity of the ACE sector to break the cycle of disadvantage, foster inclusion and develop productive, well-connected and sustainable communities that support a robust economy.

The Tasmanian Minister for Education and Training launched an Adult Learning Strategy 2020, which included input from across government, and the community and business sectors to provide a policy framework supported by $4.36 million in targeted investment.

Commonwealth and state and territory ministers with responsibility for education endorsed the first national Ministerial Declaration on Adult Community Education in 1993. Updated statements were subsequently endorsed in 1997, 2002 and finally in 2008.

The 2008 Ministerial Declaration on ACE called for a stewardship role to be adopted at all levels, including 'governments working together and providing leadership to optimise the capacity of ACE through a national approach, with jurisdictions providing policy settings and developing practical strategies that will allow ACE to flourish. (MCEETYA, 2008).

The Commonwealth Government continues its support for Adult Learners Week, which engages the ACE sector to promote the benefits of lifelong learning. Adult Learners Week is a UNESCO initiative supported in Australia by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Skills and Employment and coordinated by Adult Learning Australia.

Commonwealth initiatives that involve selected ACE RTOs include the:

- Skills for Education and Employment Program, which supports job seekers to address language, literacy and numeracy barriers
- Adult Migrant English Program, which supports eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants to improve their English language skills and settle into Australia.

1000 Community centres and neighbourhood houses

218 Community-based registered training organisations

1222 Public libraries

1130 Mens Sheds

242 University of the Third Age

Numbers are indicative only due to incomplete and changing data sources. Community-based RTO data from training.gov.au January 2021)

Other Commonwealth project-based initiatives that are open to ACE RTOs include the:

- Foundation Skills for Your Future Program, which supports Australians who need flexible language, literacy, numeracy and digital (LLND) training
- Remote Community Pilots initiative

Foundation Skills for Your Future Program is for employer/workplace and industry-specific training as well as personalised skills training (accredited or non-accredited up to Certificate II).

The Remote Community Pilots are designed to deliver tailored and flexible foundation LLND training that meets local community needs.

Current pilots include:

- Corporate Culcha in partnership with the Doomadgee community in northern QLD, working with the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation, My Pathway and the Indigenous Consulting Group
- Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation delivering from the Bardi Jawi and Nyul Nyul country on the Dampier Peninsula in WA, in partnership with the Djarindjin/Lombadina/Ardyaloon communities and Beagle Bay community, working with Business Foundations Ltd
- EyrePlus in partnership with the Ceduna, Yalata, Koonibba, Oak Valley (Maralinga Tjarutja) and Scotdesco communities in the Far West region of SA, working with Australian Employment and Training Solutions
- Literacy for Life is working with the Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation to deliver the NT Pilot.

Adult Learning Australia (ALA) is the national peak body for adult and community education. Federal funding for ALA's core activities ceased in 2016. However, ALA continues to support the ACE sector through professional development, advocacy, its 62 year old peer reviewed journal the Australian Journal of Adult Learning, and through its quarterly magazine Quest, which highlights the grass roots work of the sector.

ALA maintains international relationships with the adult education sector through its membership of and participation in the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE) and the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic Adult Education (ASPBAE), ACE Aotearoa and AONTAS in Ireland.

Summary

ACE providers are located across Australia making ACE accessible to a large number of Australians. Victoria has the largest and most diverse ACE sector in Australia. It also provides a useful model to optimise the sector for greater outcomes across Australia; particularly in rural and regional areas. ACE RTOs are largely concentrated in VIC and NSW – accounting for 70% of the ACE RTOs in the country.

How an ACE provider in the Queensland outback supports its community and how an inner city Melbourne migrant community centre meets local needs may be different, but both types of organisations share a commitment to the provision of education and activities that:

- reduce social isolation
- increase pathways to work, community and social engagement.

ACE programs

There are four main ACE programs that provide a framework for understanding the work of ACE in Australia.

1. Enrichment
2. Foundation
3. Vocation
4. Pathway

Forms of ACE

ACE takes different forms from informal or unplanned and unintended learning scenarios through to formal accredited learning programs.

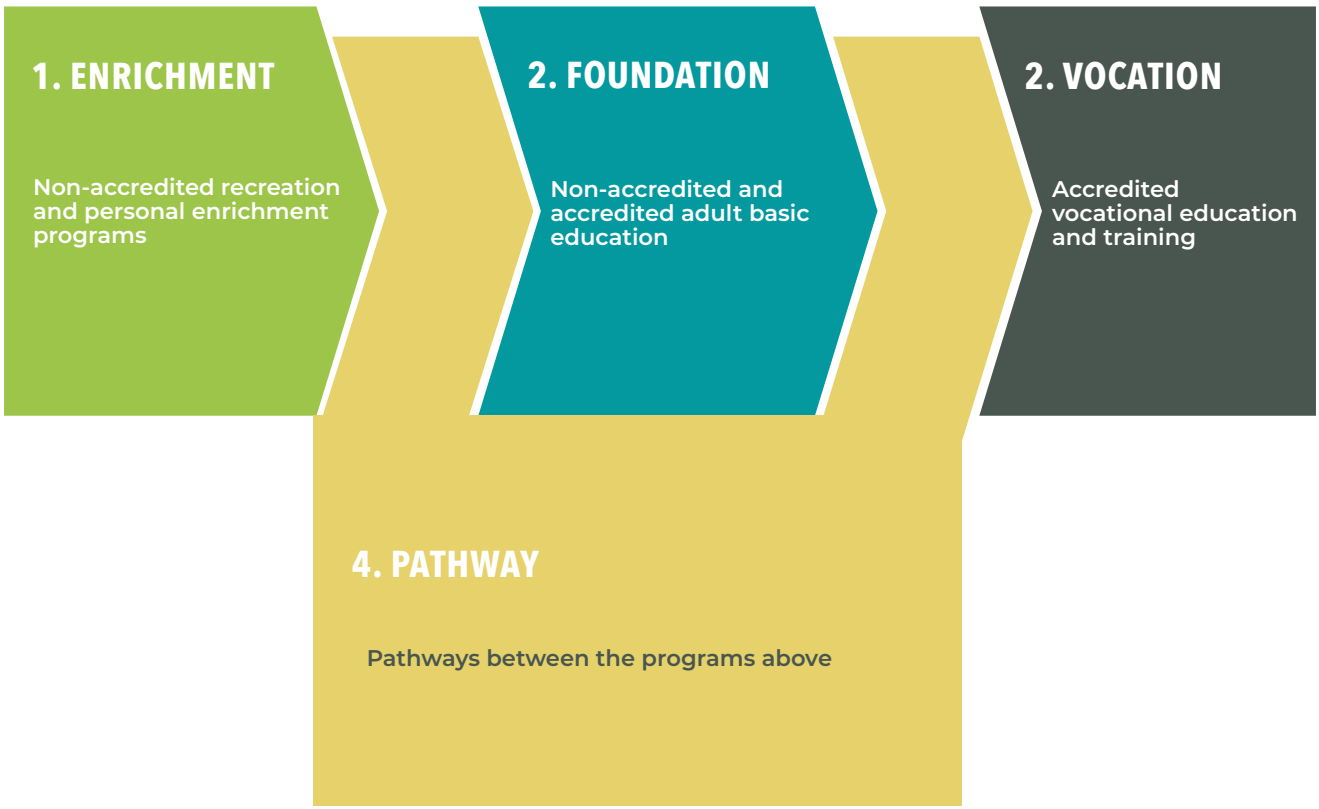
The sector is 'driven by a commitment to social justice and empowering excluded groups of learners (Hamilton & Hillier, 2006; Barton et al., 2007 in Jones 2020).

'Formal education provision in community contexts may offer an alternative to more rigid, standardised forms of educational provision, which result from increasingly prescriptive education policy and can deter marginalised learners' (Jones, 2020).

The ACE sector is diverse but common themes emerge that impact delivery. Research in the UK that draws on the experience of adult educators identified seven key factors that impacted ACE delivery:

- Needs of users
- Roles and capacity of staff
- Organisational purpose and structure
- National policies on adult education
- Networks with other adult education providers
- Income streams
- Time and expertise of volunteers.

Figure 9: The four programs of Australian ACE today



ACE enrichment

ACE enrichment programs cover a range of areas: history, languages, politics, science, arts, crafts, health and wellbeing, personal development and many others. They are short, structured learning programs that do not lead directly to formal qualifications.

Enrichment programs are fee for service, with government grants for particular policy agendas that enable fees to be reduced or waived for those who are financially disadvantaged. They are considered to be non-vocational, however, the intent of the learner may well be vocational.

All ACE providers offer enrichment learning. Indeed for some (generally the smaller providers) this is the only type of learning they provide. Estimates can only be provided on the numbers of adults participating in enrichment learning in ACE providers alone and some details on the characteristics of the participants. There is firmer data on the scale of all enrichment learning in Australia and the characteristics of the participants. According to Saunders (2001, p. 85) 'many students who undertook courses commonly labelled as general interest, leisure, enrichment or personal development realised upon completion of their course that they could apply the knowledge and skills learned to their jobs'.

The ABS undertook a survey of participation in personal interest learning across Australia from all sources in 2020–1 (ABS, 2022). Personal interest or enrichment learning was defined as 'structured learning that does not lead to a recognised qualification and is not related to employment' and is therefore largely undertaken through self-motivation for a range of reasons including the pursuit of knowledge, personal development, interest and enjoyment'.

In 2020–21, 1.2 million Australians aged between 15–74 years (6%) had participated in personal interest learning in the past 12 months (ABS, 2022). A profile of the 1.2 million personal interest learners showed more women (7%) than men (5.0%) participated but this gender difference was less marked in younger age groups.

Around 39% of those surveyed indicated they were motivated to learn in order to improve their skills or learn new ones. Thirty three per cent (33%) said the main reason they participated was for enjoyment or interest, and just under a quarter (23%) said it was for personal development.

Participation in personal interest/enrichment learning varied according to economic circumstances.

> Using the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) index of disadvantage, people in the most disadvantaged areas had the lowest rate of participation (5%, compared with 8% of those in the least disadvantaged areas). This trend was also seen with income, with participation increasing by level of equivalised household income.'
>
> (ABS, 2022).

Data found on participants in personal enrichment learning at ACE providers is piecemeal, and shown below by ACE provider type.

Neighbourhood Houses and Community Learning Centres

All Neighbourhood Houses and Community Learning Centres (NHCLC) offer enrichment programs but participants in this learning were not separated from participants in other types of learning in their national survey of Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres (NH&Cs) undertaken in late 2010/early 2011. However, it may be fair to assume that most of the participants in NH&Cs are involved in enrichment learning.

The survey found that on average each week 320 people participate in activities at a Neighbourhood House or Centre. Nationally that equates to approximately 320,000 people engaged in activities each week and 14,500,000 visits per year.

As to the characteristics of those involved, 98% of the NH&Cs reported engaging people on low incomes, socially isolated people or those at risk of social isolation and people with low levels of formal education and training. The ANCHA survey reported that the following demographic data:

- 84% people with low incomes
- 80% women aged between 45–64
- 79% people at risk of social isolation
- 61% people with low levels of formal education
- 41% culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- 40% men aged between 45–64

- 37% people with disability
- 31% people in housing crisis
- 20% newly arrived migrants
- 16% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- 14% refugees

ANHCA has not conducted a national survey since 2011.

Community Sheds

Around 175,000 men are currently participating in community men's sheds most of whom are older men, with the mean age 69 years (median=70) and an age range from 23 to 100 years (Golding, 2021).

Many sheds are located in small rural towns and offer a space for men to learn in an informal way.

> 'Participation in sheds has been shown to bring together diverse men (and sometimes women) in ... a 'community of practice' through the social sharing of skills and knowledge.'
>
> (Golding, 2021).

Many participants in men's sheds 'have negative attitudes towards most forms of formal learning' Golding, 2007). However, Golding's research found that 'men positively engaged in a wide range of informal, community-based learning opportunities' in men's sheds because it presented opportunities for men to meaningfully engage with learning activities.

Women's sheds are grass roots organisations focussed on 'building confidence, capability and connection ... and 'empowering women of all ages with practical and creative skills. Data on women's sheds is limited.

U3As

U3As are volunteer-based organisations where older Australians engage in recreational learning activities. U3As report around 69,000 members (Swindell, 2011).

The U3A movement began in Australia in 1984 and is driven by retired community members with 'little or no assistance from governments'. U3As are independent entities, with networks in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, and Queensland, and in New Zealand.

U3A Online emerged in 1998 as 'an informal network and resource centre for U3As ... providing online teaching materials and free online services which assist each U3A to better meet its educational and social objectives' (Swindell, 2011).

Summary

This data suggests that ACE organisations are significant providers of all personal enrichment learning undertaken in Australia, with many participants from disadvantaged groups. Personal enrichment learning yields personal benefits that improve individual health and wellbeing. For example, a survey (Flood & Blair, 2013) conducted of the 1436 men's shed members found that social interaction is the main reason men join the sheds and is perceived as the greatest benefit – 45% of men's sheds members surveyed mentioned 'getting out and socialising' as the greatest benefit of the sheds and 41% mentioned 'making friends'. Learning or passing on skills is the next most often mentioned benefit (20%); including learning or passing on 'trade skills', 'computer skills', 'people skills' and 'learning about health issues'.

Research in the UK into the wider benefits of all types of learning found that:

> '[T]he main wider benefits ... show up in health, mental health and job-related outcomes. Both formal and informal types of learning tend to matter, suggesting that participation in learning in itself is important ...
>
> 'Adult learning has more than twice the impact on self-confidence than does being employed. This is an especially large effect and there are potential positive spillovers for a range of market and non-market outcomes from feeling better about oneself'.
>
> (Dolan, Fujiwara & Metcalfe, 2012, p. 8)

Personal enrichment programs offer a gateway for participants into other learning activities, especially for disadvantaged learners. However, ACE providers face signficant challenges supporting personal enrichment programs when many of their learners are in the lowest income brackets.

ACE foundation

Many ACE organisations offer non-accredited and accredited adult basic education programs developing language, literacy, numeracy, digital and job skills such as communication, learning to learn, problem solving, self-presentation and time management. These programs are offered with high levels of support.

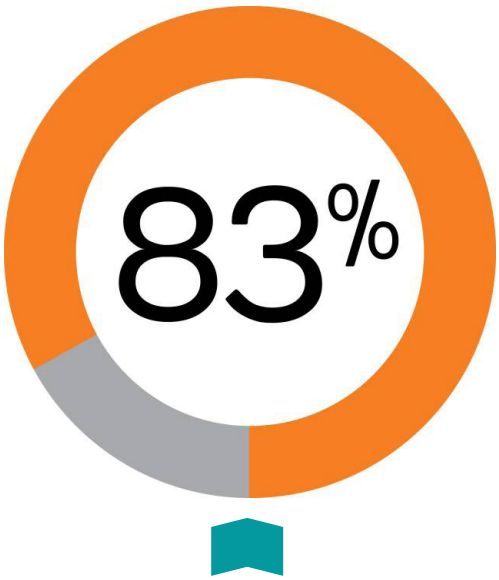
Non-accredited foundation programs may be standalone or embedded in other courses such as English through cooking, language of childbirth and healthy eating.

Accredited programs may be standalone or integrated into a vocational area. They may be full qualifications, subjects only and/or skillsets to fill gaps.

In 2019, 83.2 per cent of community education providers delivering nationally recognised training had enrolments in foundation skills subjects.

'This rate is similar for community education providers in major cities (84.9%) and higher than other training providers in regional areas (72%)'.

(NCVER 2019)'.



Percentage of providers delivering nationally recognised foundation skills training.

Non-accredited programs

There is no single data collection on Australian adults involved in non-accredited foundation or adult basic education programs delivered by ACE providers. However, there is data available in some states; for example, Victoria's pre-accredited Learn Local provision (refer p. 26–7 for more details); NSW's ACE Community Service Obligation program and SA ACE provision.

Victorian pre-accredited programs

A Deloitte study (2017) into the pre-accredited learner journey in Victoria found that over 60,100 adults commenced a pre-accredited program between 2013–2015. The Deloitte study also identified that:

- pre-accredited learners were almost exclusively in ACFE's priority cohorts
- 57% of learners engaged in further education
- 29% of learners transitioned to an accredited program
- 23% of learners went on to attain an accredited qualification.

Deloitte (2017) analysis (refer figure 10) indicated:

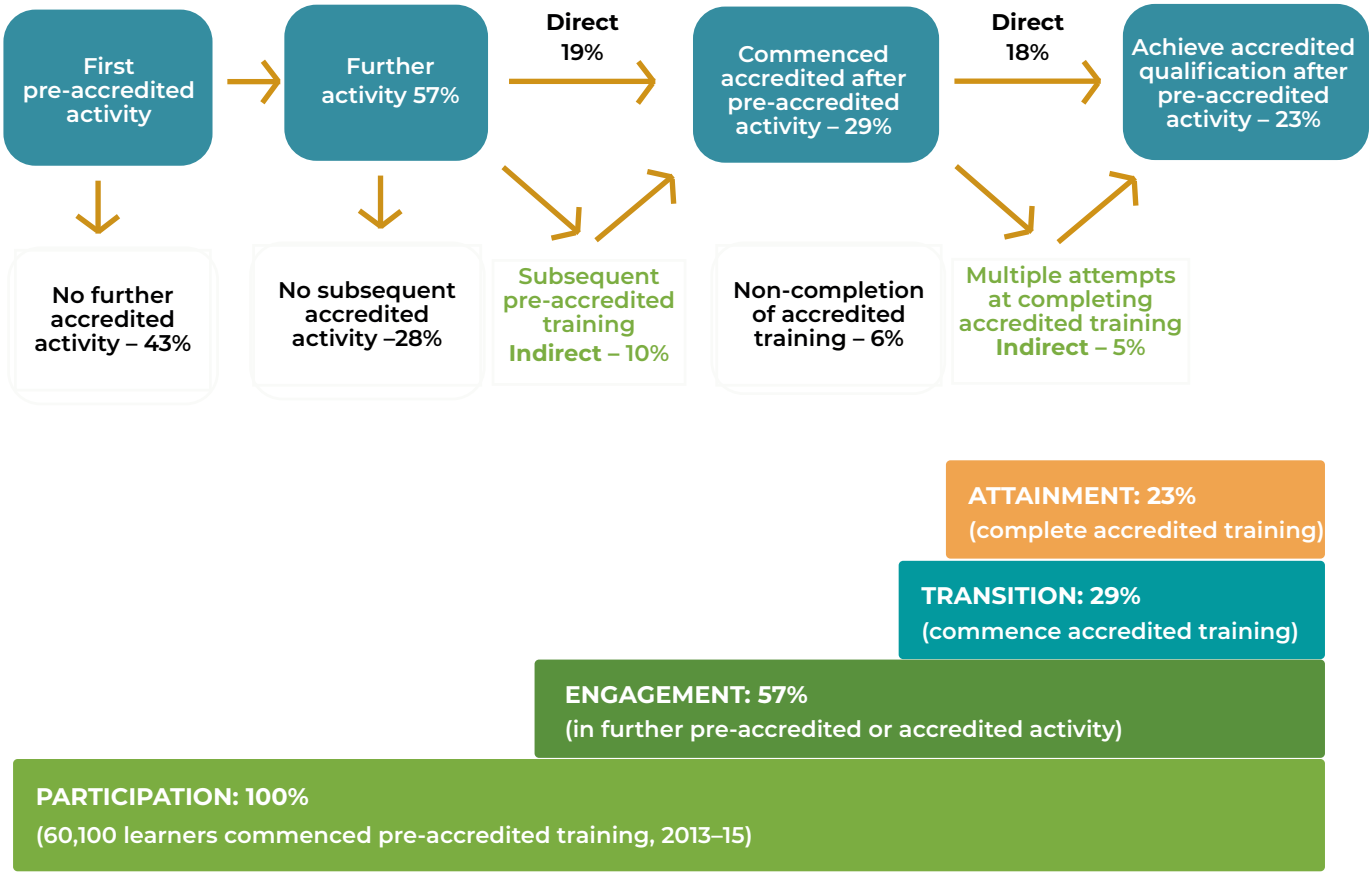
- pre-accredited training is targeting and servicing its priority learner cohorts (only 3% of learners do not belong to any cohort)
- learners are successfully transitioning into accredited training (29%)
- a large proportion go on to attain a qualification (23%).

NSW ACE CSO programs

Research funded by the NSW government on non-accredited ACE foundation programs found that 'enrolments in non-accredited training have been steadily increasing ... since the start of the NSW ACE Community Service Obligation program in 2015, boosting non-accredited enrolments to nearly 10,000 in 2020' (Cloutman, 2021). Cloutman (2021) also found that in 2018–2019:

- 56% of learners in non-accredited programs were unemployed
- enrolments were weighted towards regional/remote areas (56%), with metropolitan areas (44%)
- more women (66%) than men (34%) participated
- 14% of learners identified as Indigenous
- 22% of learners identified as having a disability.

Figure 10: Pre-accredited learner outcomes from learners who commenced in 2013–2015



(Source: Deloitte, 2017, Preaccredited Learner Journey)

Figure 11: The range of programs delivered through NSW ACE non-accredited training

(Source: ANHCA, 2011, Table 3, p. 11)

The report indicated that in NSW the ACE sector offers 'a welcoming environment that seeks to meet the learning needs of its diverse cohorts of students through innovative, often custom-designed programs, particularly for those who are anxious about or not used to learning'. The Cloutman report further identified four main trends in NSW's non-accredited training (refer figure 10):

1. Psychological purpose, designed to boost students' self-confidence
2. Foundation skills in language, literacy, numeracy and digital (LLND)
3. Employability preparation; that is, developing awareness of the workplace and the skills and attitudes required to successfully navigate it
4. Preparation for specific industries and jobs.

Cloutman reported that ACE programs are usually precursors to almost any type of accredited program or complement 'any type of foundation-level accredited program. A key recommendation of the Cloutman report was for more robust evaluation of the impact of ACE programs on a learner's wellbeing taking a broader return on investment approach.

> There is a need to explore the array of benefits that the ACE program can have beyond merely learning outcomes.
>
> Cloutman, (2021, p. 39

SA ACE programs

In 2017, the Department of State Development in SA released the: Adult Community Education program statement: A Strong ACE Program for 2018–19 and Beyond. This statement recognised ACE as a mechanism to ensure participation is possible for all.

ACE in SA is identfied as gateway or the first step on the 'training and work continuum'.

ACE providers in SA deliver both accredited and non-accredited foundation skills training. In 2015–16, there were over 50 community organisations delivering ACE programs across SA. With over 156,000 contact hours delivered to 4,000 ACE participants:

- 2,922 in non-accredited courses
- 1,173 in accredited.

In the same period, more than 1,200 ACE participants went on to enrol in further training and 562 people reported that they were now working.

Lack of national data

Dymock (2007) attempted to gauge the extent of non-accredited literacy and numeracy training across Australia. Dymock's data includes courses and activities where students received a statement of attainment or participation, but not accredited qualifications, in:

- embedded language, literacy, numeracy programs
- adult English as a second language
- adult literacy for native speakers of English
- adult numeracy.

The data identified around 4,000 students engaged with the 125 providers from across Australia, except the Northern Territory. Learners were mostly aged between 30–49 years, with strong representation from cohorts between 20–29 and 50–59 years. Providers in Dymock's (2007) research reported a range of reasons as to why adults participate in non-accredited adult basic education programs:

1. They want to learn English for everyday purposes.
2. They are looking for social contact and want to take more control over their lives.
3. They want to improve their self-confidence and capacity to interact with the wider community.
4. They would struggle with accredited adult basic education courses.

Around one-quarter of the study's program coordinators believed that students participated in non-accredited adult basic education primarily for employment-related reasons, and two-thirds of providers said they had partnerships, links and networks with training and employment organisations and agencies. Other data indicated that:

- 26% of respondents stated that up to 10% of their students went on to other training and 28% to work
- 22% of respondents stated that up to 25% of their students went on to other training and 21% to work
- 17% indicated that up to or about 50% of their students went on to other training and 13% to work
- 12% of respondents stated that up to 75% of their students went on to other training and 7% to work.

However, a significant number of providers didn't know.

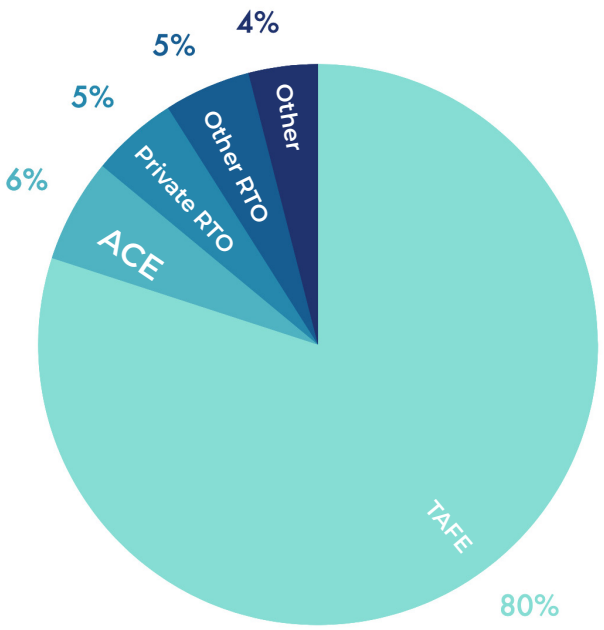
Dymock suggested that the contribution of non-accredited language, literacy and numeracy courses to both personal development and social capital should receive greater attention and acknowledgement, particularly through funding support. Updated data on non-accredited foundation skills provision is vital.

Accredited programs

Accredited adult basic education programs are delivered by ACE registered training organisations. These programs are reported within the mixed field programmes category in the National VET Provider Collection managed by the NCVER. Field of Education (FOE) Type 12: Mixed Field Programmes are made up of general education programs, social skills courses, employment skills courses and other mixed field programmes.

Current NCVER data on government-funded program enrolments in FOE 12: Mixed Field Programmes for ACE RTOs shows that in 2020 there were 9,361 enrolments, which represents around 6% of total government-funded FOE 12 enrolments (refer Figure 12). This is a notable reduction in program enrolments, which is across provider types and could reasonably be explained by the impact of COVID 19.

Figure 12: Government-funded FOE12 program enrolments 2020



Total VET program enrolments in FOE 12: Mixed Field Programmes in ACE VET providers in 2020 were 13,160 ACE program enrolments, representing 7.1% of total VET FOE 12 enrolments.

For time series data and details, refer Appendix 2: FOE-12 program / subject enrolments – Table 2, 2a.

Program enrolments

Program enrolments in government-funded accredited adult basic education in ACE providers have had peaks and lulls over the past 15 years but have decreased overall to the lowest level since 2003 – emphasising a significant move away from full program enrolments (refer Figure 13).

Total VET ACE FOE 12 program enrolments have also declined (Figure 14).

Further declines from 2019 to 2020 could be explained by the severe impact of the first year of COVID and lockdowns in NSW and Victoria – where the largest numbers of ACE RTOs are concentrated.

Figure 13: Trends in govt-funded ACE FOE 12 – Mixed Mixed fields program by program enrolments 2003–2020

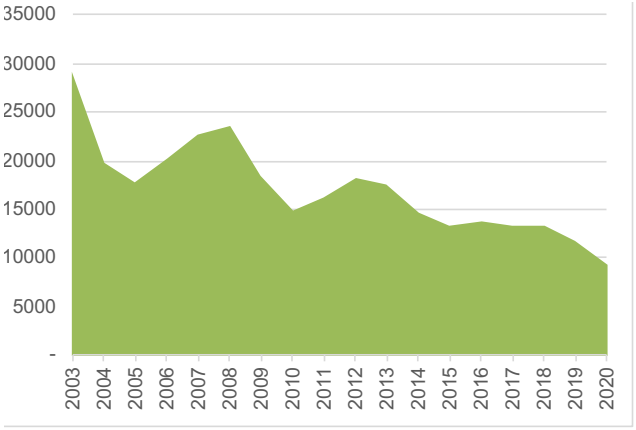
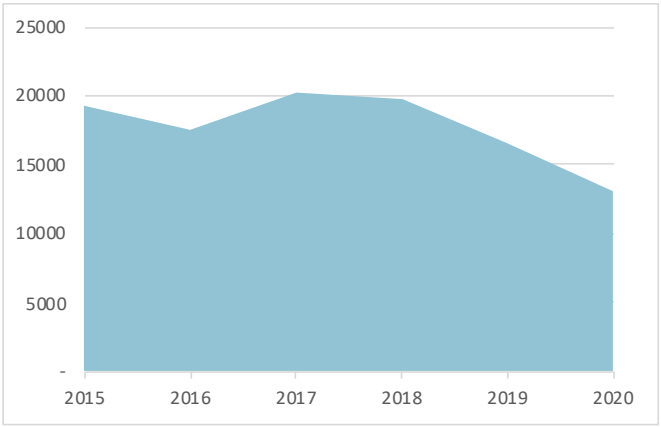


Figure 14: Trends in Total VET ACE FOE 12 – Mixed fields program by program enrolments 2003–2020



Subject enrolments

Subject enrolments in government-funded accredited adult education (FOE12) have also slumped to 43,325 – with a sharp decline between 2019 and 2020, taking subject enrolments lower than 2003. (refer Figure 15).

Total VET subject enrolments in 2020 were 73,370 representing a very significant decrease since 2015 when reporting began but this decrease is across provider types (refer Figure 16).

Figure 15: Trends in govt-funded ACE FOE 12 – Mixed fields program by subject enrolments 2003–2020

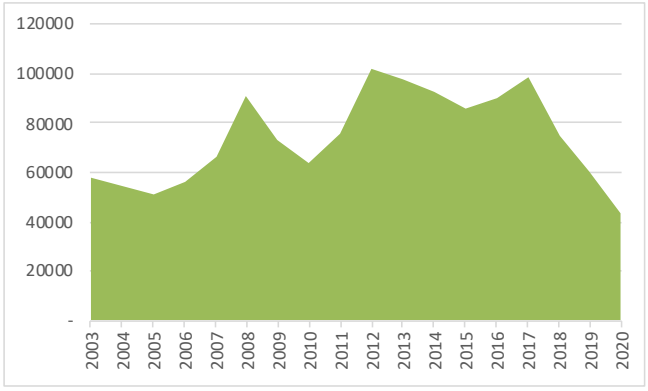
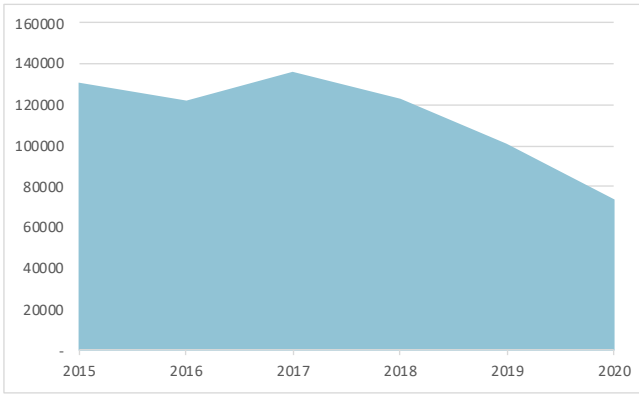


Figure 16: Trends in Total VET ACE FOE 12 – Mixed fields program by subject enrolments 2015–2020



Average subject enrolments per program in government-funded adult basic education at ACE VET providers from two (2) enrolments per program in 2003 to five (5) in 2020. Average training hours per program have increased from 96 in 2003 to 223 in 2020.

Average subject enrolments in Total VET adult basic education decreased slightly from seven (7) in 2015 to six (6) in 2020, and training hours per program from 243 to 190 (refer Appendix 2 for details).

Training hours

The number of training hours at ACE RTOs in government-funded accredited basic adult education (FOE12) in 2020 was 2,088,472.

Time series data shows a consistent decline since a peak in 2014 (refer Figure 17). A similar decline is

Figure 17: Trends in govt-funded ACE FOE 12 – Mixed fields program by training hours 2003–2020

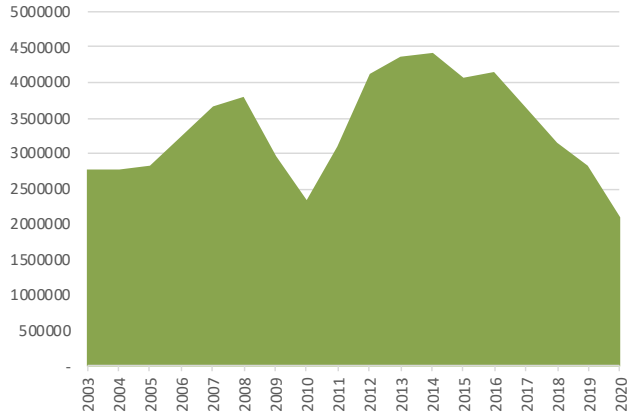
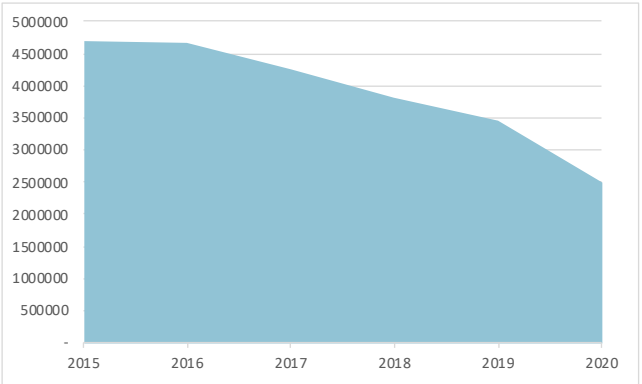


Figure 17: Trends in Total VET ACE FOE 12 – Mixed fields program by training hours 2003–2020



shown in Total VET accredited basic adult education (FOE12) at 2,504,102 (refer Figure 18).

For time series data and details, refer Appendix 2: FOE-12 training hours – Table 3 & 3a.

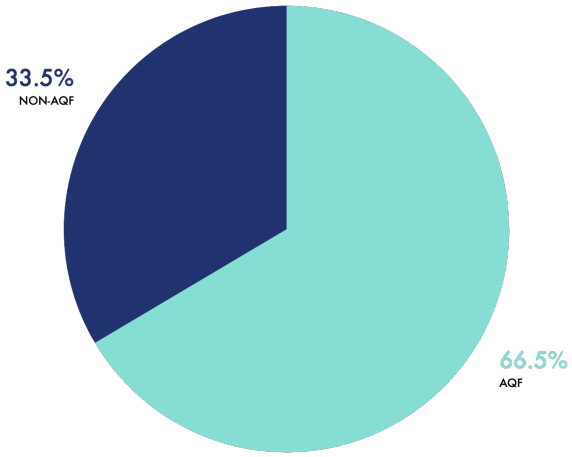
AQF and non AQF training

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) sets out the different levels of nationally recognised qualifications in Australia by describing 10 qualification levels across VET and higher education. AQF training is all Certificate I and above qualification courses.

Non-AQF training includes courses at secondary education level (Year 11 & 12), non-award courses, subject-only enrolments (i.e. not enrolled in a course), statements of attainment (part courses), and not elsewhere classified.

Around 67% of all ACE government-funded accredited basic adult education (FOE12) delivery is AQF training, which is higher than all other providers (55%). Total VET AQF delivery is closer to 90%.

Figure 18: ACE government-funded FOE 12 AQF and non-AQF delivery 2020

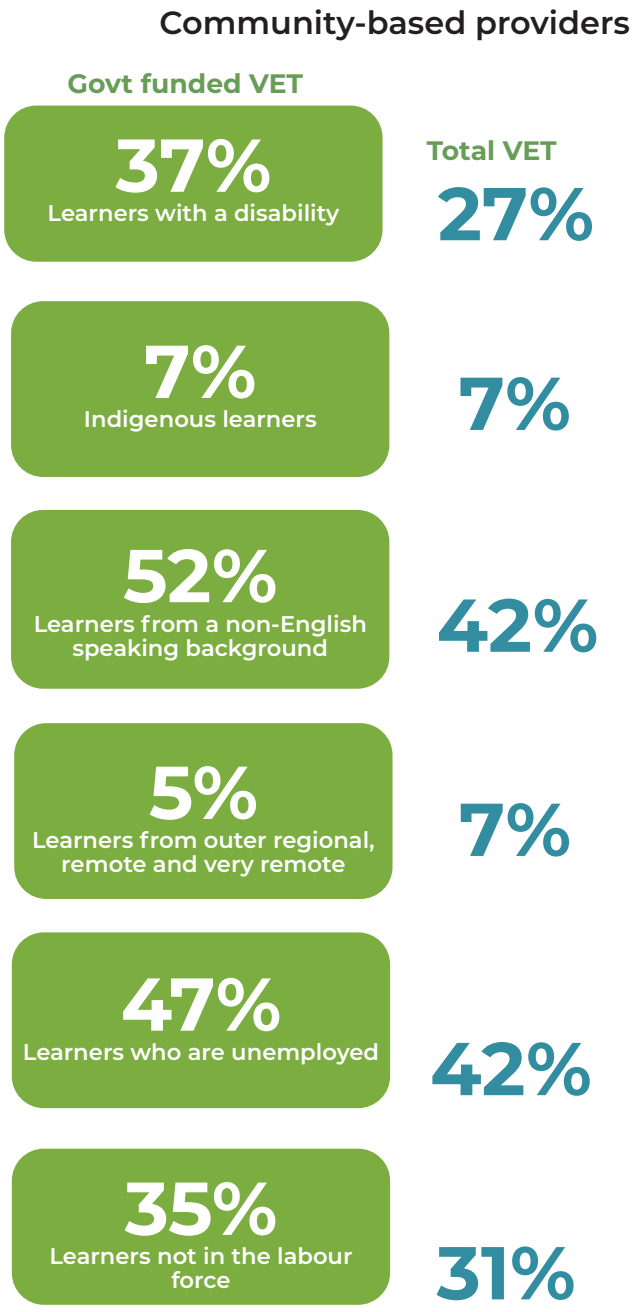


Equity groups

Accredited adult basic education (FOE12) learners include people from various equity groups. ACE RTOs are significant providers of accredited adult basic education to key equity groups; for example, in government funded delivery of FOE12:

- People with a disability and the unemployed are significantly more highly represented in accredited adult basic education at ACE providers than all other VET providers.
- Students from a non-English speaking-background (NESB) are also more highly represented in accredited adult basic education program enrolments at ACE providers.
- The percentage of students from outer regional, remote and very remote regions has been decreasing across all providers over the past 10 years. However, ACE providers showed an increase in program enrolment for this cohort from 2017 to 2019.

Figure 19: Government funded and Total VET ACE FOE 12 equity groups 2020



Total VET program enrolments tell a similar story (refer Figure 19 for comparison).

For time series data and details, refer Appendix 4: FOE-12 equity groups – Table 6 & 6a.

Summary

ACE providers have strong expertise in delivering basic adult education (including language, literacy, numeracy and digital programs) that offer pathways into further learning and work, as well as essential life skills. Many ACE providers also provide or partner with social and community services to support learners through life challenges or barriers to learning.

Accredited adult basic education programs assist people to cope with the demands of everyday life. They boost the functioning, confidence, and self-esteem of educationally disadvantaged adults and can motivate them to do further study (Foster & Beddie 2005).

Adult basic education programs can help people find and keep work, and when combined with vocational subjects they can offer a greater understanding of the world of work.

Almost half of Australia's adult population has literacy and numeracy skills levels below those required for effective functioning in the workplace and modern life in general (ABS, 2008 and OECD, 2013).

> There is a 'foundation learner type' who needs to further develop in key areas such as literacy, numeracy and interpersonal skills in order to undertake further study.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults is a ten-year framework for improving education and employment outcomes for working age Australians with low levels of language, literacy, numeracy and employability skills.

The Strategy recognises that literacy development is a lifelong activity with life-wide implications. Governments aim to have two thirds of working age Australians having the literacy and numeracy skills levels required to function effectively in workplaces and modern life generally by 2022. The Strategy as well as many state government statements on ACE acknowledge 'providers of adult education in community settings' as critical to providing diverse foundation skills programs for adults, including through pre-vocational and bridging programs' (SCOTESE, 2012, p. 12).

The contribution of non-accredited language, literacy and numeracy courses for both personal development and social capital should receive greater attention and acknowledgement, particularly through funding support. Finding ways of assessing and acknowledging the full range of outcomes achieved from non-accredited community language, literacy and numeracy courses may aid achievement of this support (Dymock & Billet, 2008).

Given the significant outcomes achieved in basic adult education by ACE providers, it's important to further investigate the capacity of the sector to lead in the delivery of foundation skills programs; particularly those aimed at key equity groups.

Ensuring flexibility in the delivery of basic adult education training is important. Not all adults need full qualifications training in this area, rather they want skills-gap training that can be standalone or integrated with vocationally focussed learning programs.

> ACE providers require support to build the skills of their adult basic education practitioners to ensure that disadvantaged learners have access to foundation skills.

> Some ACE organisations deliver formal vocational education and training as well as adult basic education and personal interest learning. These ACE providers have registered training organisation (RTO) status to deliver formal or accredited VET subjects, skill sets and whole qualifications, and issue recognised Australian VET qualifications and other awards.

> There are also ACE providers that are not RTOs but who assist with formal accredited VET delivery by entering into partnerships with other RTOs that take responsibility for assuring the quality of assessments and judgements about competence or outcomes achieved and the issuing of the final VET awards.

ACE vocational

ACE providers bring their distinctive qualities to VET, which are identified as strongly local, community-based, flexible, market-driven, learner-centred and focussed on assisting disadvantaged students into and through the VET system.

Harris & Simons (2007) compared data they collected on a sample of ACE providers (84) with a sample of other private RTOs (330). The data painted a picture of the sector's distinctiveness. This research showed that ACE providers:

- were more embedded in their local communities, usually delivered in one state only
- offered markedly different programs
- were socially oriented with high percentages of their courses in mixed field programs such as literacy and numeracy, information technology and in the fields of society and cultures, education and creative arts
- offered more pastoral care, education support and personal/career counselling services than private providers
- relied more heavily on government funding for their nationally accredited training and on part time and casual staff and so they 'skate on relatively thin ice'

(Harris & Simons 2007).

All nationally recognised VET

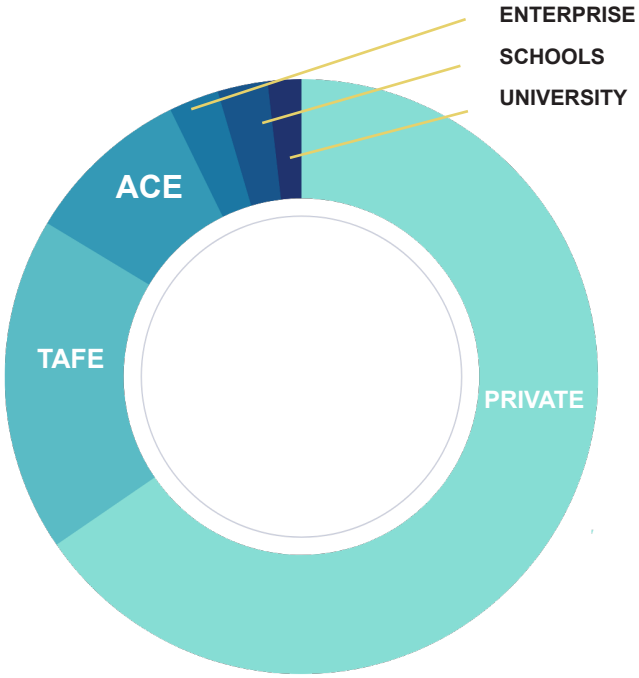
According to NCVER, in 2020 3.9 million students were enrolled in nationally recognised VET programs, down 6.4% from 2019. Of these:

- 2.8 million (71.9%) were enrolled at private providers
- 792,700 (20.1%) were enrolled at TAFE
- 386,400 (9.8%) were enrolled at ACE providers
- 111,000 (2.8%) were enrolled at enterprise providers
- 105,100 (2.6%) were enrolled in schools
- 69,200 (1.7%) were enrolled at university.

(NCVER, 2020)

Percentages add up to more than 100% as some learners may have enrolled in training with more than one provider types.

Figure 19: All VET students in nationall recognised programs by provider type 2020

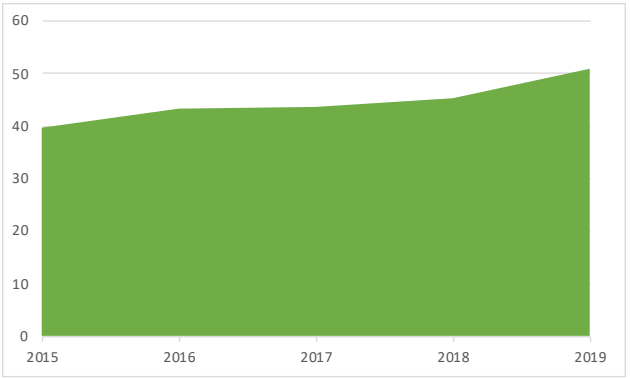


Overall completion rates at 51% in 2020 have increased by around 11% since 2015. They are relatively comparable with other provider types, especially considering the equity cohorts that ACE providers work with:

Enterprise providers (60%)
Private providers (55%)
ACE providers (51%)
TAFE (48%).

In 2020, the subject load pass rate for ACE providers is the second highest of all providers Enterprise providers (89.9%); **ACE providers (83.4%);** Private providers (83.2%) and TAFE (78.6%).

Figure 20: All VET students in nationally recognised programs by ACE provider type 2020



Government-funded VET

NCVER data on government-funded program enrolments in all VET shows that in 2020 there were 34,850 program enrolments at ACE providers, or 2.5% of all government-funded VET. Around 70% of program enrolments identified as female.

> In 2020, around 54% of all government funded VET program enrolments were learners from SEIFA quintile 1 (the most disadvantaged) and SEIFA quintile 2, which is higher than all other providers.

Thirty-eight per cent of ACE enrolments included learners in regional and remote locations and 37% had lower formal attainment having only achieved year 10 or lower. Also significant is that 20% of program enrolments were from people with a disability and 52% spoke a language other than English at home.

Victoria delivers the most government-funded accredited vocational education in Australia (figure 21).

Total VET

Total VET data shows that in 2020 there were 82,560 program enrolments at ACE providers or 3.1%. Sixty-six per cent identified as female; 35% included learners in regional and remote locations and 43% were in SEIFA quintile 1 or 2, which is higher than TAFE, enterprise and private providers. Thirty-four percent of ACE participants had achieved Year 10 or below, including a small percentage that did not go to school at all. This data shows that ACE providers are working with some of the most disadvantaged and high priority learner cohorts within Australia (figure 22).

Figure 21: % of all government funded VET at ACE providers by state in 2020

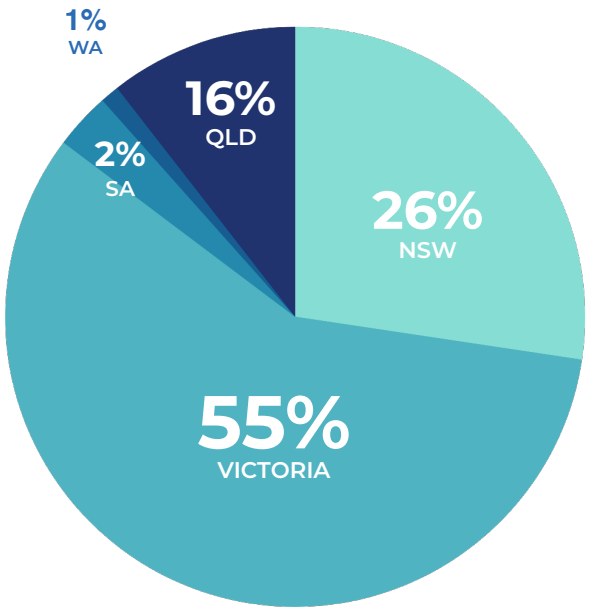
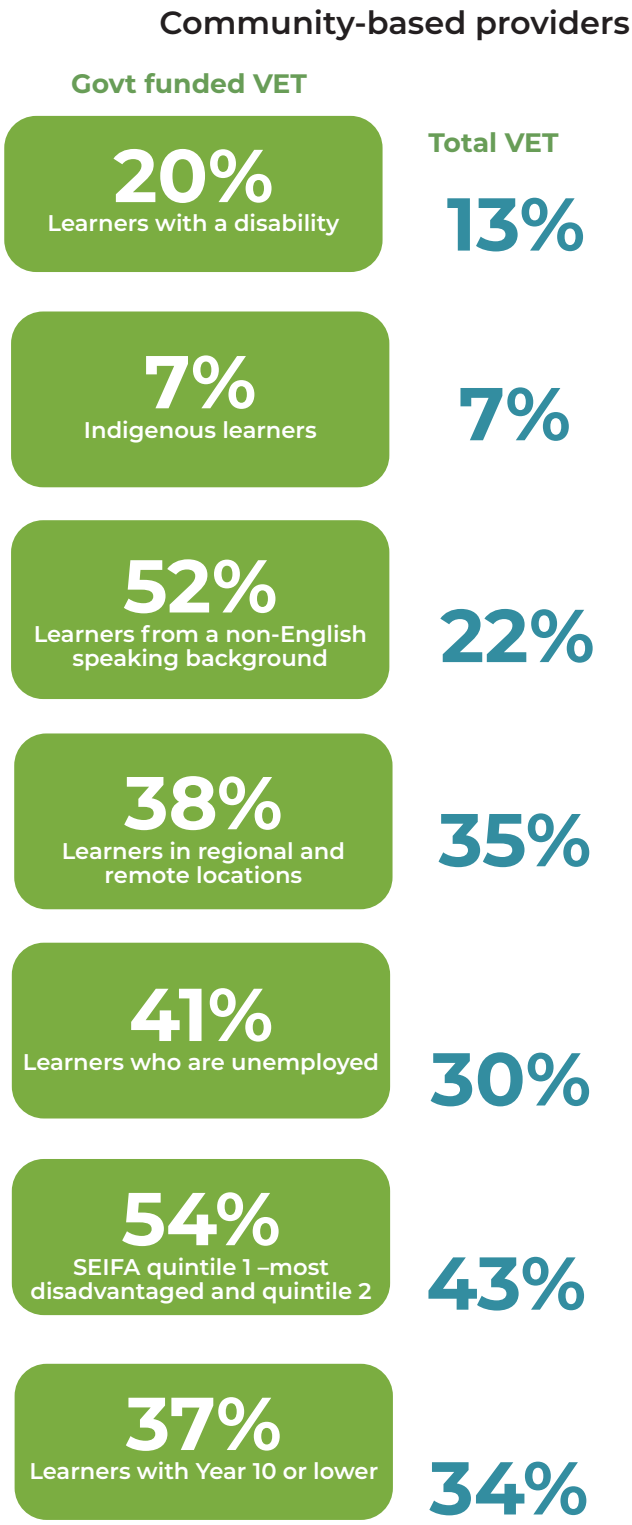


Figure 22: % of all government funded VET equity groups at ACE provider type 2020



VET excluding mixed fields

NCVER data on ACE VET provision in all fields of education (other than FOE 12 adult basic education) shows that in 2020 there were 27,975 (or 2.5%) government-funded program enrolments at ACE VET providers (refer Table 7 & 8) and 69,400 for total VET program enrolments (refer Table 7a & 8a).

Sharper declines in 2020 could be attributed to the impact of COVID 19.

Program enrolments

Programs enrolments in government-funded VET and total VET at ACE providers (excluding FOE 12) continue to decrease (refer Figures 23–24 and Tables 7–8; 7a–8a for further details).

Figure 23: Govt-funded VET program enrolments (excluding FOE-12) 2003–2020

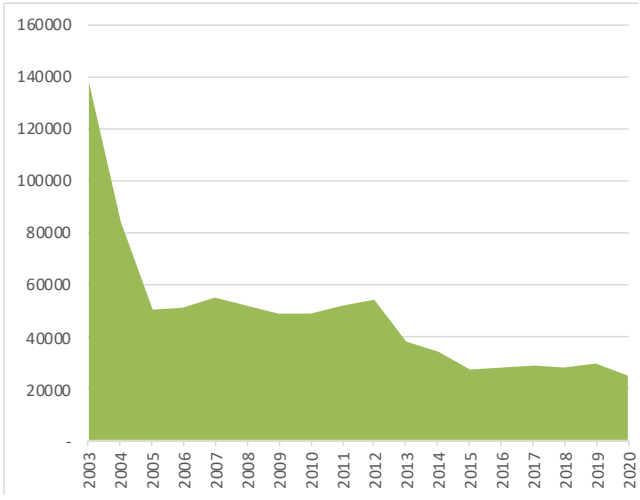
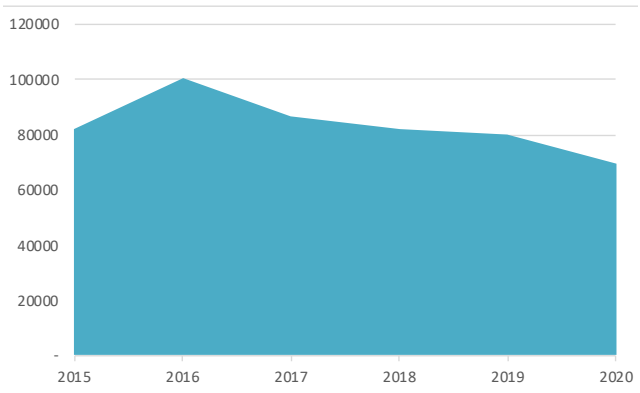


Figure 24: Total VET program enrolments (excluding FOE-12) 2015–2020



Subject enrolments

Subject enrolments peaked in 2012 but have steadily decreased for government-funded VET (259,190 in 2020) and total VET at ACE providers is still notably higher than 2015 (refer Figures 25–26 and Tables and 7–8; 7a–8a for future details).

In 2020, average subject enrolments per program for government-funded provision at ACE providers were 10 and 18 for total VET.

Figure 25: Govt-funded VET subject enrolments (excluding FOE-12) 2003–2020

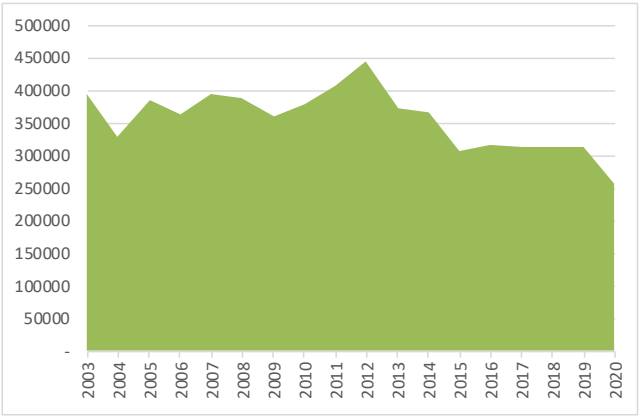
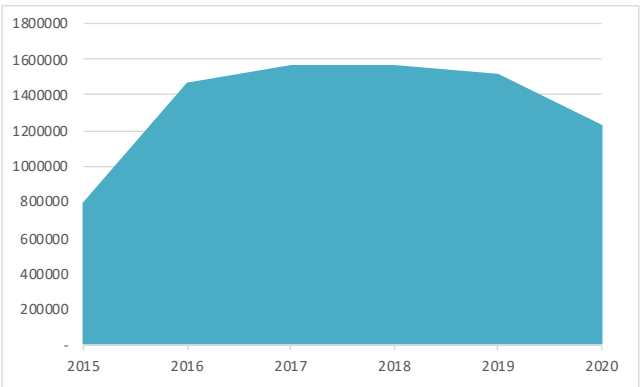


Figure 26: Total VET subject enrolments (excluding FOE-12) 2015–2020



Training hours

Training hours have also declined in government-funded VET programs at ACE providers (8,045,280 in 2020) and total VET (24.4M). Training hours per program in 2020 are 316 (govt-funded) and 353 (total VET)

Figure 27: Govt-funded VET training hours (excluding FOE-12) 2003–2020

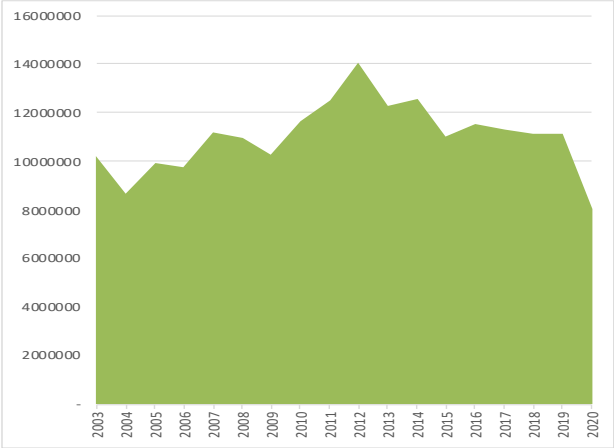
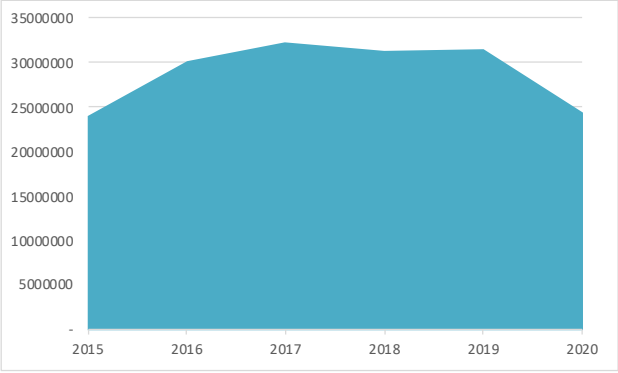


Figure 28: Total VET training hours (excluding FOE-12) 2015–2020



Appendices

Refer Appendix 3, Tables 7, 7a, 8 and 8a for details. Also Tables 9 and 9a for a comparison between AQF and non-AQF delivery for VET excluding FOE-12.

Equity groups

Consistent with other findings, 2020 data highlights ACE RTOs as significant providers of VET to key equity groups. Particularly significant is the percentage of unemployed people enrolled in government-funded VET programs, accounting for around 28% at ACE providers compared with 16% for all other providers. ACE providers also work with higher percentages of people with disability (11% vs 6%) (refer Appendix 3, Table 10). The findings for total VET are similar (refer Table 10a).

Summary

ACE providers are significant providers of vocational education in Australia often achieving comparable or better results than other post secondary education providers and working with some of the most vulnerable and disadvanatged cohorts.

While COVID19 has played a role in the decreasing numbers of accredited VET enrolments, a decline persists across program enrolments, subject enrolments and training hours at community providers.

ACE providers deliver qualifications across fields and AQF levels (refer Table 11). ACE providers in particular deliver a significant number of Certificate III and below qualifications and non-AQF programs as well.

The 2020 Student Outcomes Summary (SOS) identified that at ACE providers:

- 84% of graduates achieved their main reason for doing the training
- 83% of graduates were satisfied with the support services
- 89% of graduates were satisfied with the teaching
- 90% were satisfied with the overall quality of the training – a result that is greater than any other post secondary education provider.

Of the subject completers at ACE providers:

- 90% achieved their main reason for doing the training
- 87% were employed or in further study after training
- 87% would recommend the provider
- 95% were satisfied with their teaching
- 94% were satisfied with the overall quality of the training – again a result that is greater than any other post secondary education provider.

Refer Table 12 for additional details on qualification completers.

Key findings

Data on accredited VET programs at self-identified ACE or community education providers is available, but there are many successful non-accredited initiatives that target hard to reach, disadvantaged and disengaged cohorts. Many of these programs are delivered through ACE.

> '[L]earners with very low-level skills benefit from stand-alone, face-to-face delivery methods, without any vocational contextualisation. This is particularly the case for the large proportion of adults with low skills who are not working or actively job seeking.
>
> 'At this enabling level, learners need to focus on very basic skill acquisition around learning to read and write before they can begin to use these skills in other more contextualised learning.

(ALA, 2011; Roberts & Wignall, 2011)

This scan has identfied that the ACE sector is an enabler of inclusive learning and facilitates access by offering learning programs in friendly, community settings that cater for adults of varying abilities and backgrounds (refer Table 13 for more details on the distinct characteristics of ACE).

It offers a gateway for all adults to return to learning at any stage along the learning time line, no matter their age, gender, culture, ability or previous educational experience or attainment. The sector recognises that there is no 'traditional student', only a spectrum of learners with their own needs and preferences to be taken into account (ALA, 2020).

The ACE sector has strong expertise in delivering basic adult education programs (e.g.language, literacy, numeracy and digital) that offer pathways into further learning and work, as well as essential life skills. Many ACE providers also provide or partner with social and community services to support learners through life challenges or barriers to learning.

Australian ACE provision is diverse and tailored to the local community in which it operates. It is influenced by state / territory governments who have primary responsibility for ACE. There are significant differences in how each jurisdiction views and funds ACE (ALA, 2020). ACE organisations are significant providers of both accredited and non-accredited adult education.

Victorian ACE providers deliver signficantly more non-accredited and accredited adult education programs than other states and territories. Victoria's Learn Local provision has its own pre-accredited quality framework.

The Victorian ACE sector is very diverse and includes community learning centres, community colleges, neighbourhood houses, large not-for-profit organisations such as Yooralla, Brotherhood of St Laurence and Jesuit Social Services, the Centre for Adult Education and a number of culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specialist providers such as Adult Multicultural Education Services and Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association.

In NSW, the sector offers another strong model for community education provision. It consists largely of network a community colleges who offer a range of non-formal and formal programs in local communities. Most community colleges are also registered training organisations.

Government funded non-accredited programs, such as those offered through the ACE sector in Victoria and NSW offer viable pathways to further education and training within their own quality framework. These programs target disadvantaged adult learners and identified priority cohorts, and research in Victoria shows that pathways from pre-accredited to industry level vocational training and jobs are actually stronger than from Certificate I and IIs (ALA, 2019).

In SA, there is an identifiable sector of ACE providers; however, the current government's 'purchased services' model strongly focussed on employment outcomes has significantly reduced the number of ACE programs.

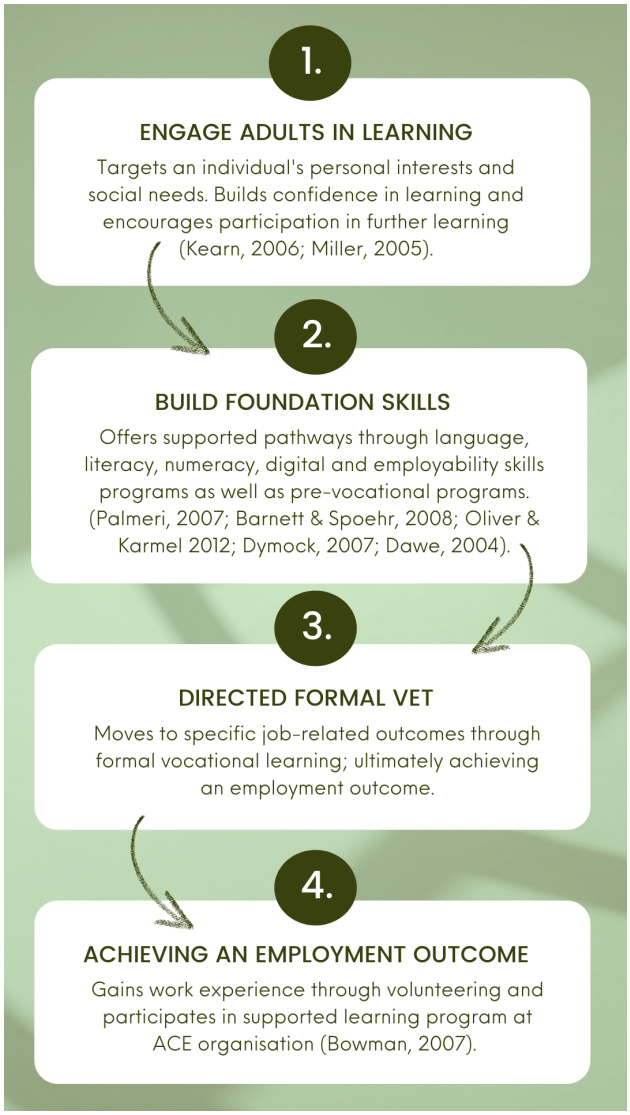
ACE pathways

Research suggests that a supported learning pathways approach may be best for many Australians; particularly those with low levels of formal educational attainment and/or poor previous experiences in formal education.

Pathways provision has the potential to aid disadvantaged learners to make the transition from informal learning for leisure and self-improvement to more formal learning to build basic or foundation skills and vocational skills, steps they may not have contemplated previously through lack of confidence in their ability to cope with formal study.

ACE providers start with the needs of the learner and provide learning programs that build on their existing skills and knowledge and actively engage them in the development of their own future learning directions. They engage people who are socially and educationally

Figure 29: Four ACE pathways



disadvantaged, providing opportunities to access pathways to formal education, training and/or jobs.

Return on investment

The ACE sector delivers on key government policy objectives by 'engaging in education those less likely to access other, more formal educational institutions, thereby lifting the skill levels across the spectrum of the adult community' (Allens Consulting, 2008).

ACE delivers economic and employment outcomes as well as social, health and wellbeing benefits.

ACE sector in Victoria.

Victoria, has the largest, most diverse ACE sector in Australia that has been well funded over many years and delivers in all four program areas of ACE (Allens Consulting, 2008).

A 2008 report describes and quantifies the economic benefits resulting from all ACE activity then in Victoria to assist the Victorian Government to evaluate the contribution of ACE to the achievement of policy objectives and to the economies of local communities, regions and Victoria as a whole.

The benefit categories of the model included 'market benefits' that are traded in the market economy that result from the additional productivity of Victorians who have increased their human capital by participating in ACE.

The other category was non-market benefits that are not traded in the market economy, such as benefits to the health and wellbeing of ACE participants, that while not as readily quantifiable, are real and substantial, and should not be overlooked when estimating the value of ACE.

- The market benefits were estimated to amount to an increase in GSP of $16 billion, and tax benefits of $21.7 million over the period 2007 to 2031 in then net present value terms.
- The non-market benefits were suggested to be of at least a similar magnitude. These benefits are achieved relative to a Victorian Government investment of $741 million over twenty-five years (in discounted terms)

(Allen Consulting 2008)

ACE in South Australia

South Australia provides an example of an ACE sector with a more traditional focus – on personal interest informal and non-formal learning activities, and adult basic education non-formal and formal – and also facilitating pathways to formal VET.

An impact Study of the Community and Neighbourhood/Community Centres Sector of SA was conducted in 2013 (SA Centre for Economic Studies, 2013). The principal objective of this study was to provide evidence as to the overall impacts of community centres.

The interest was particularly in assessing the following outcomes:

- employment, participation in education (including accredited and non-accredited courses), volunteering pathways, return to work, skills transference
- social inclusion especially for people with a disability, new arrivals, the older demographic including retirees

- health and wellbeing, family resilience
- the scale of volunteering and participation in centre's activities.

The research found that:

- the number of visitations to centres is over 2 million per annum
- the value of the volunteer contribution is between $32 million and $43 million
- crèche services provided either free or for a very small donation are valued (conservatively) at $1.3 million
- the conduct of ACE programs have a positive wage/income impact and a value in delivery of up to 4 times their cost
- the ability of centres to leverage up other funds is 3.5 times what they are provided but the cost of grant applications some for very small amounts is quite high, estimated conservatively because it does not include cost of acquittal to be between $231,000 to $385,000

(SA Centre for Economic Studies, 2013, Table E.2 p. iii).

Summary

Australian ACE offers accessible lifelong learning opportunities that respond to the needs of adults within local communities. ACE provision includes personal interest learning (enrichment); adult basic education (foundation) as well as formal vocational education.

ACE providers are significant providers of all personal enrichment learning undertaken in Australia offering adults pathways back into learning by supporting social inclusion and impacting positively on health and wellbeing.

ACE providers support many adults to improve basic foundation skills and provide pathways into work or further vocational learning. In 2020, ACE providers accounted for around 6% of all program enrolments in government-funded and 7% of total VET accredited adult basic education programs.

ACE organisations are significant providers of accredited adult basic education to key equity groups; such as, people with a disability and the unemployed. These cohorts are significantly more highly represented at ACE providers than all other VET providers of adult basic education.

According to the ABS (2022) people in the most disadvantaged areas had the lowest rate of participation (5%, compared with 8% of those in the least disadvantaged areas) in personal interest/ enrichment learning.

According to NCVER, in 2020 3.9 million students were enrolled in nationally recognised VET programs, down 6.4% from 2019. Of these, 386,400 (9.8%) were enrolled at ACE providers.

In 2020 there were 34,850 program enrolments at ACE providers, or 2.5% of all government-funded VET

- 54% of all government funded VET program enrolments were learners from SEIFA quintile 1 (the most disadvantaged) and SEIFA quintile 2, which is higher than all other providers.
- 37% of ACE enrolments included learners in regional and remote locations.
- 37% of ACE enrolments includes learners with lower formal attainment having only achieved year 10 or lower.
- 20% of program enrolments were from people with a disability and 52% spoke a language other than English at home.
- Victoria delivers the most government-funded accredited vocational education in Australia

ACE VET enrolments account for the most significant shift from unemployment to employment after their training, showing better results than all other providers. Students at ACE providers are also the most satisfied with the qualty of their training.

There is no single data collection on Australian adults involved in non-accredited foundation or adult basic education programs delivered by ACE providers. However, stated based data in Victoria on the Learn Local network, in NSW on ACE CSO programs and SA ACE provision have reported positive outcomes; particularly in the areas of non-accredited LLND pathway programs.

The ACE sector achieves outcomes against multiple policy areas including education, health, human services, employment, industry and business, and community and regional development. The sector plays an important role educating many adult Australians; particularly the disadvantaged, in learning but needs increased and ongoing support from all tiers of government to sustain and grow the sector's efforts.

Recommendations

The ACE sector demonstrably serves important social and economic needs within communities across Australia for the ongoing education of adults. Yet, it lacks broad recognition, financial support and connections with local, state and federal governments, and this impedes its capacity to achieve these important goals.

This is becoming increasingly important in a nation that is facing expected as well as unexpected disruptions such as technological change, pandemics, natural disasters and the ageing of our population. Despite these disruptions, we need and expect Australians to continue to learn, be educated and engaged in productive activities within their communities.

For ACE to achieve its full potential, the following actions are recommended:

- A renewed national Ministerial Declaration is required to:
  - » recognise ACE as a significant contributor in both accredited VET and non-accredited education by all state and territory governments
  - » achieve national social and economic goals through programs that target educational disadvantage.
- Trial a regional planning approach to improve participation and success in VET for disadvantaged learners and to allow for greater coordination and collaboration between the TAFE and ACE sectors, and industry.
- ACE must be supported with infrastructure and resources to sustain a volunteer workforce, such as that extended to Lifesavers and volunteer firefighters.
- Research must be commissioned to capture and map the educational needs of adult Australians, their alignments with existing ACE provisions and providers, and to identify how best education programs for these adults should be organised, enacted and evaluated.

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Appendices

About the data

The following data was sourced through National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NVCER) VOCSTATS and Databuilder in 2021.

Notes

NCVER often revises how they report data, which impacts assumptions that can be drawn from this longitudinal data.

Appendix 2: Foundation tables – accredited adult basic education programs are delivered by ACE registered training organisations are reported within the mixed field programmes category in the National VET Provider Collection managed by the NCVER. Field of Education (FOE) Type 12: Mixed Field Programmes are made up of general education programs, social skills courses, employment skills courses and other mixed field programmes.

In 2020, NCVER revised how they report program attributes where subjects are not delivered as nationally recognised programs. As a result, subject enrolments for FOE reports only subjects that were part of nationally recognised programs in 2020.

Enterprise providers are registered training organisations whose primary business is not the delivery of training and development.

AQF training is all Certificate I and above qualification courses. Non-AQF training includes courses at secondary education level (Year 11 & 12), non-award courses, subject-only enrolments (i.e. not enrolled in a course), statement of attainment courses, and ‘not elsewhere classified’.

Appendix 1: Reporting provider type

Table 1: Govt-funded VET training by reporting provider type 2010–2020

Provider type	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
	no.	**%**	**no.**	**%**	**no.**	**%**	**no.**	**%**	**no.**	**%**	**no.**	**%**
TAFE	58	2.8	59	2.6	59	2.8	58	2.8	57	2.8	53	2.7
Other govt	12	0.6	13	0.6	14	0.7	12	0.6	14	0.7	14	0.7
ACE	477	22.7	492	21.9	311	14.8	424	20.3	420	20.3	387	19.6
Other RTOs	1627	77.4	1762	78.4	1810	86.1	1666	79.7	1646	79.5	1589	80.4
Total	**2101**	**100**	**2248**	**100**	**2103**	**100**	**2091**	**100**	**2070**	**100**	**1977**	**100**

Provider type	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
	no.	**%**	**no.**	**%**	**no.**	**%**	**no.**	**%**	**no.**	**%**
TAFE	40	2.1	40	2.1	35	2.0	25	1.5	24	1.6
Other govt	13	0.7	10	0.5	10	0.6	10	0.6	10	0.7
ACE	379	19.6	358	19.1	357	20.4	337	20.8	315	20.6
Other RTOs	1560	80.8	1525	81.4	1403	80.3	1301	80.3	1231	80.6
Total	**1931**	**100**	**1874**	**100**	**1747**	**100**	**1620**	**100**	**1527**	**100.0**

Table 1a: Total VET training providers by reporting provider types 2015–2020

Provider type	2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
	no.	**%**	**no.**	**%**	**no.**	**%**	**no.**	**%**	**no.**	**%**	**no.**	**%**
TAFE	53	1.3	41	1.0	41	1.0	36	0.9	25	0.7	24	0.7
Universities	15	0.4	15	0.4	13	0.3	13	0.3	14	0.4	14	0.4
Schools	437	10.8	418	10.3	396	10.0	393	10.3	388	10.5	382	10.9
ACE	282	7.0	263	6.5	246	6.2	237	6.2	219	5.9	205	5.8
Enterprise providers	193	4.8	170	4.2	146	3.7	142	3.7	137	3.7	128	3.6
Private training providers	3088	76.1	3150	77.8	3101	78.6	3009	78.6	2898	78.7	2766	78.6
Total	**4057**	**100**	**4051**	**100**	**3943**	**100**	**3830**	**100**	**3681**	**100.0**	**3519**	**100.0**

Appendix 2: Foundation

Table 2: Govt-funded program enrolments in FOE 12 – Mixed field programmes – ACE and total reporting provider type, 2003-2011; 2012–2020

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
ACE 000	29.1	19.8	17.8	20.1	22.7	23.5	18.4	14.8	16.2
Total 000	209.6	201.2	206.6	236.0	254.9	252.2	268.7	270.7	283.3
%	13.9	9.8	8.6	8.5	8.9	9.3	6.8	5.5	5.7

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
ACE 000	18.2	17.5	14.6	13.4	13.7	13.4	13.4	11.7	9.4
Total 000	347.4	376.2	241.3	176.7	169.7	177.6	185.1	190.8	161.5
%	5.3	4.6	6.1	7.6	8.1	7.6	7.3	6.1	5.8

Table 2a: Total VET program enrolments in FOE 12 – Mixed field programmes – ACE and total reporting provider type, 2015–2020

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
ACE 000	19.2	17.5	20.2	19.7	16.6	13.1
Total 000	229.4	225.6	235.1	223.7	210.3	183.9
%	8.4	7.7	8.6	8.8	7.9	7.1

Table 3: Govt funded program enrolments, subject enrolments and training hours – FOE 12 – Mixed field programmes by ACE reporting provider type, 2003–2011; 2012–2020

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
ACE providers									
Program enrolments	29,057	19,802	17,756	20,129	22,714	23,513	18,383	14,829	16,184
Subject enrolments	57,444	54,766	51,294	55,764	66,352	91,181	73,083	63,705	75,502
Training hours	2,780,487	2,780,487	2,815,617	3,224,147	3,658,524	3,804,770	2,965,811	2,353,913	3,102,920
Subjects per enrolment	*2*	*3*	*3*	*3*	*3*	*4*	*4*	*4*	*5*
Training hours per program	*96*	*140*	*159*	*160*	*161*	*162*	*161*	*159*	*192*

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
ACE providers									
Program enrolments	18,245	17,482	14,643	13,352	13,704	13,427	13,426	11,758	9,361
Subject enrolments	101,575	98,002	92,418	85,729	89,737	89,700	75,053	60,467	43,327
Training hours	4,115,945	4,364,402	4,414,319	4,078,810	4,153,215	3,629,743	3,160,898	2,838,240	2,088,720
Subjects per enrolment	*6*	*6*	*6*	*6*	*7*	*7*	*6*	*5*	*5*
Training hours per program	*226*	*250*	*301*	*305*	*303*	*270*	*235*	*241*	*223*

Table 3a: Total VET program enrolments, subject enrolments and training hours – ACE FOE 12 - Mixed field programmes by ACE reporting provider type, 2015–2020

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
ACE providers						
Program enrolments	19,241	17,467	20,209	19,741	16,630	13,160
Subject enrolments	130,639	121,780	136,470	122,960	100,540	73,370
Training hours	4,690,048	4,666,383	4,241,492	3,805,210	3,449,720	2,504,102
Subjects per enrolment	*7*	*7*	*7*	*6*	*6*	*6*
Training hours per program	*243*	*267*	*210*	*193*	*207*	*190*

Table 4: Govt-funded AQF & non-AQF program enrolments – FOE 12 – by provider type 2010–2015; 2016–2020

Provider	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
	no. '000'	%	no. '000'	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
TAFE												
AQF	85.5	31.6	104.1	36.8	163.9	47.2	180.5	48.0	113.2	46.9	81.5	46.1
Non-AQF	144.0	53.2	131.2	46.3	112.0	32.2	100.6	26.7	53.9	22.3	35.5	20.1
Total	229.4	84.8	235.3	83.1	275.9	79.4	281.1	74.7	167.1	69.2	117.0	66.2
OTHER GOVT												
AQF	8.1	3.0	9.7	3.4	15.2	4.4	12.5	3.3	6.8	2.8	6.6	3.8
Non-AQF	6.6	2.4	8.1	2.9	4.8	1.4	3.4	0.9	2.2	0.9	2.4	1.4
Total	14.7	5.4	17.8	6.3	20.0	5.8	15.9	4.2	8.9	3.7	9.0	5.1
ACE												
AQF	8.8	3.2	10.2	3.6	13.7	3.9	12.8	3.4	9.8	4.0	8.8	5.0
Non-AQF	6.1	2.2	6.0	2.1	4.6	1.3	4.7	1.3	4.9	2.0	4.5	2.6
Total	14.8	5.5	16.2	5.7	18.2	5.3	17.5	4.6	14.6	6.1	13.4	7.6
OTHER RTOs												
AQF	7.7	2.9	9.0	3.2	27.0	7.8	57.9	15.4	45.2	18.7	31.0	17.5
Non-AQF	4.0	1.5	4.9	1.7	6.3	1.8	3.8	1.0	5.4	2.2	6.3	3.6
Total	11.7	4.3	13.9	4.9	33.3	9.6	61.7	16.4	50.7	21.0	37.3	21.1
TOTAL PROVIDERS												
AQF	110.1	40.7	133.1	47.0	219.7	63.2	263.7	70.1	175.0	72.5	128.0	72.4
Non-AQF	160.6	59.3	150.2	53.0	127.7	36.8	112.5	29.9	66.3	27.5	48.7	27.6
Total	270.7	100	283.3	100	347.4	100	376.2	100	241.3	100	176.7	100

Provider	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
TAFE										
AQF	79.8	47.0	86.4	48.6	82.4	44.5	84.3	44.2	69.6	43.1
Non-AQF	35.9	21.1	42.3	23.8	58.8	31.8	67.0	35.1	60.1	37.2
Total	115.6	68.1	128.7	72.5	141.2	76.3	151.2	79.3	129.8	80.3
OTHER GOVT										
AQF	7.9	4.7	7.8	4.4	8.2	4.4	7.0	3.7	6.2	3.8
Non-AQF	2.5	1.5	2.1	1.2	2.8	1.5	2.9	1.6	1.8	1.1
Total	10.4	6.1	9.9	5.6	11.0	5.9	9.9	5.3	7.9	4.9
ACE										
AQF	9.0	5.3	9.7	5.5	9.4	5.1	7.2	3.8	6.2	3.8
Non-AQF	4.7	2.8	3.7	2.1	4.1	2.2	4.6	2.4	3.1	1.9
Total	13.7	8.1	13.4	7.6	13.4	7.3	11.8	6.2	9.4	5.7
OTHER RTOs										
AQF	23.7	14.0	21.7	12.2	16.5	8.9	15.7	8.2	12.9	8.0
Non-AQF	6.2	3.7	3.9	2.2	3.0	1.6	2.2	1.2	1.6	1.0
Total	30.0	17.7	25.6	14.4	19.5	10.6	17.9	9.4	14.5	9.0
TOTAL PROVIDERS										
AQF	120.4	71.0	125.6	70.7	116.4	62.9	114.1	59.8	95.0	58.8
Non-AQF	49.2	29.0	52.0	29.3	68.6	37.1	76.7	40.2	66.6	41.2
Total	169.7	100	177.6	100	185.1	100	190.8	100	161.6	100

Table 4a: Total VET AQF & non AQF program enrolments – FOE 12 – by provider type 2015–2020

Provider	2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
	no. '000'	%	no. '000'	%	no. '000'	%	no. '000'	%	no. '000'	%	no. '000'	%
TAFE												
AQF	102.8	44.8	97.0	43.0	101.3	43.1	93.7	41.9	92.0	43.7	73.8	40.1
Non-AQF	18.0	7.9	20.8	9.2	19.1	8.1	29.2	13.1	30.2	14.4	26.9	14.6
Total	120.8	53.7	117.9	52.3	120.5	51.2	122.9	55.0	122.2	58.1	100.7	54.7
UNIVERSITIES												
AQF	7.9	3.4	7.5	3.3	6.8	2.9	6.1	2.7	5.4	2.6	3.9	2.1
Non-AQF	.6	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.6	0.3	0.7	0.3	0.4	0.2
Total	8.5	3.7	8.1	3.6	7.2	3.0	6.7	3.0	6.1	2.9	4.3	2.3
SCHOOLS												
AQF	21.7	9.5	26.5	11.7	19.8	8.4	19.4	8.7	25.2	11.9	29.4	16.0
Non-AQF	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.04	0.02
Total	21.9	9.6	26.7	11.9	19.9	8.5	19.5	8.9	25.4	12.0	29.4	16.
ACE												
AQF	17.6	7.7	15.9	7.0	18.6	7.9	17.5	7.8	14.5	6.9	11.9	6.5
Non-AQF	1.6	0.7	1.6	0.7	1.6	0.7	2.3	1.0	2.1	1.0	1.3	0.7
Total	19.2	8.4	17.5	7.7	20.2	8.6	19.7	8.8	16.6	7.9	13.2	7.2
ENTERPRISE PROVIDERS												
AQF	5.0	2.2	4.0	1.8	5.2	2.2	4.8	2.2	3.4	1.6	1.9	1.0
Non-AQF	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.1	1.0	0.4	1.0	0.5	0.6	0.3
Total	5.8	2.5	4.3	1.9	5.5	2.4	5.8	2.6	4.4	2.1	2.5	1.3
PRIVATE TRAINING PROVIDERS												
AQF	46.9	20.4	43.5	19.3	55.7	23.7	44.7	20.0	31.1	14.8	29.5	16.0
Non-AQF	6.2	2.7	7.6	3.4	6.0	2.6	4.3	1.9	4.8	2.3	4.0	2.1
Total	53.1	23.1	51.1	22.6	61.8	26.3	49.0	21.9	35.9	17.1	33.5	18.1
TOTAL PROVIDERS												
AQF	201.9	88.0	194.4	86.2	207.5	88.3	186.2	83.3	171.7	81.65	150.4	81.8
Non-AQF	27.5	12.0	31.2	13.8	27.5	11.7	37.5	16.7	38.6	18.35	33.5	18.2
Total	229.4	100.0	225.6	100.0	235.1	100.0	223.7	100.0	210.3	100.0	183.9	100.0

Table 5: Govt funded AQF and non AQF % program enrolments – FOE 12 – by ACE and all other providers 2003–2012; 2012–2020

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
ACE providers									
Total	29,057	19,802	17,756	20,129	22,714	23,513	18,383	14,829	16,184
AQF %	37.6	58.1	77.2	67.8	60.7	60.9	64.5	59.2	62.9
Non AQF %	62.4	41.9	22.8	32.2	39.3	39.1	35.5	40.8	37.1
All other providers									
Total	180564	181364	188833	215850	232169	228712	250355	255852	267070
AQF %	46.0	47.1	46.5	32.0	38.4	39.4	39.0	39.6	46.0
Non-AQF %	54.0	52.9	53.5	68.0	61.6	60.6	61.0	60.4	54.0

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
ACE providers									
Total	18,245	17,482	14,643	13,352	13,704	13,427	13,426	11,758	9,360
AQF %	74.9	73.1	66.6	66.2	65.9	72.2	69.8	60.9	66.5
Non AQF %	25.1	26.9	33.4	33.8	34.1	27.8	30.2	39.1	33.5
All other providers									
Total	329124	329124	226651	163345	155989	164190	171678	179025	152200
AQF %	62.6	70.0	72.9	72.9	71.4	70.6	*62.4*	*64.1*	*54.9*
Non-AQF %	37.4	30.0	27.1	27.1	28.6	29.4	*37.6*	*41.5*	*39.3*

Table 5a: Total VET program enrolments – FOE 12 – by ACE and all other providers 2015–2020

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
ACE providers						
Total	19,241	19,241	20,209	19,741	16,630	13,160
AQF %	91.7	90.8	92.3	88.6	87.2	89.8
Non AQF %	8.3	9.2	7.7	11.4	12.8	10.2
All other providers						
Total	210,170	208,119	214,850	203,929	193,605	170,765
AQF %	87.7	85.8	87.9	*82.7*	*81.1*	*81.2*
Non-AQF %	12.3	14.2	12.1	*17.3*	*18.9*	*18.8*

Table 6: Govt-funded program enrolments – FOE12 – Mixed fields programmes by reporting provider type and equity group, % of total, 2003–2011; 2012–2020

Equity group / Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Students with a disability (% of total)									
ACE providers	16.1	15.9	21.5	21.9	22.1	21.0	21.5	25.9	28.3
All other providers	16.3	16.2	16.5	16.8	16.1	16.2	15.8	16.3	16.5
Indigenous students (% of total)									
ACE providers	4.3	3.4	4.8	4.3	6.7	5.9	8.1	8.5	7.2
All other providers	10.1	10.2	10.2	9.6	9.3	10.2	10.3	10.8	9.4
Students from a non-English speaking-background (% of total)									
ACE providers	20.7	32.7	33.7	31.7	29.0	34.6	32.1	32.6	33.2
All other providers	20.6	21.9	23.1	22.7	28.2	28.1	26.8	27.7	27.7
Students from outer regional, remote and very remote regions (% of total)									
ACE providers	N/A	N/A	N/A	7.1	7.0	6.9	10.4	14.1	6.7
All other providers	N/A	N/A	N/A	16.5	17.4	18.1	18.5	19.2	14.6
Students who are unemployed (% of total)									
ACE providers	22.1	25.4	27.3	29.6	29.4	31.5	32.2	31.9	38.8
All other providers	27.2	26.5	25.6	25.4	25.5	25.3	26.6	28.9	29.0
Students not in the labour force (% of total)									
ACE providers	23.4	27.7	32.8	31.6	29.6	29.0	28.5	29.9	32.6
All other providers	24.7	24.2	24.0	24.1	27.1	27.3	27.6	27.8	26.7

Table 6: Cont'd

Equity group / Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Students with a disability (% of total)									
ACE providers	28.0	28.6	34.5	40.6	40.3	38.1	34.6	36.5	36.9
All other providers	15.1	13.9	16.0	15.7	16.0	14.8	14.4	13.9	12.8
Indigenous students (% of total)									
ACE providers	4.3	5.4	4.9	4.5	3.9	4.5	4.8	5.7	6.5
All other providers	7.5	6.2	7.4	8.5	8.7	8.7	8.5	8.3	7.6
Students from a non-English speaking-background (% of total)									
ACE providers	33.5	36.3	40.2	44.6	43.7	44.1	51.0	55.5	52.2
All other providers	29.2	31.1	38.7	43.9	44.6	45.8	43.9	48.5	50.8
Students from outer regional, remote and very remote regions (% of total)									
ACE providers	4.5	6.0	3.8	3.1	3.6	3.4	4.6	5.1	5.0
All other providers	12.1	10.6	10.1	10.2	9.8	9.8	9.2	9.0	11.1
Students who are unemployed (% of total)									
ACE providers	45.3	43.1	44.9	46.9	49.9	48.9	48.2	45.6	46.9
All other providers	29.9	32.8	33.1	31.3	29.7	27.6	25.0	26.0	26.4
Students not in the labour force (% of total)									
ACE providers	27.6	32.0	31.0	34.4	32.5	33.1	34.9	36.3	35.3
All other providers	25.0	23.5	28.0	32.1	35.1	38.4	37.3	37.2	37.8

Table 6a: Total VET program enrolments – FOE12 – Mixed fields programmes by reporting provider type and equity group, % of total, 2003–2020

Equity group / Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Students with a disability (% of total)						
ACE providers	29.3	33.1	29.3	27.0	28.2	27.3
All other providers	12.0	12.2	11.7	11.2	10.9	10.3
Indigenous students as						
ACE providers	7.2	6.6	5.5	6.8	6.2	7.0
All other providers	7.0	7.6	7.7	7.4	7.4	7.0
Students from a non-English speaking-background (% of total)						
ACE providers	33.7	34.7	35.3	43.1	47.8	42.3
All other providers	43.3	44.2	48.0	48.0	48.4	44.8
Students from outer regional, remote and very remote regions (% of total)						
ACE providers	5.6	5.5	6.9	8.1	6.1	7.2
All other providers	10.9	10.5	9.8	9.2	10.0	10.3
Students who are unemployed (% of total)						
ACE providers	38.8	41.8	45.3	45.2	43.9	41.6
All other providers	25.4	24.5	24.3	22.4	22.3	23.2
Students not in the labour force (% of total)						
ACE providers	31.0	30.6	27.6	27.9	31.0	31.1
All other providers	29.3	29.4	32.7	32.7	33.0	29.5

Appendix 3: Vocational

Table 7: Govt-funded program enrolments (excluding FOE 12 – Mixed field programmes) by reporting provider type, 2003–2020

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
ACE 000	138.0	84.6	50.3	51.7	55.5	52.1	48.9	48.7	52.4
Total 000	1266.5	1148.4	1137.4	1199.2	1204.0	1211.2	1213.7	1345.2	1492.4
%	10.9	7.4	4.4	4.3	4.6	4.3	4.0	3.6	3.5

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
ACE 000	54.0	38.2	34.2	27.6	28.4	28.8	28.0	29.4	25.5
Total 000	1538.9	1436.5	1385.1	1194.5	1282.2	1209.9	1120.4	1181.3	1246.5
%	3.5	2.7	2.5	2.3	2.2	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.0

Table 7a: Total VET program enrolments (excluding FOE 12 – Mixed field programmes) by reporting provider type, 2015–2020

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
ACE 000	82.4	100.4	86.6	82.0	80.0	69.4
Total 000	2850.6	2791.4	2633.4	2402.1	2507.8	2452.4
%	2.9	3.6	3.3	3.4	3.2	2.8

Table 8: Govt funded VET (excluding FOE 12 – Mixed field programmes) 2003–2011; 2012–2020

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
ACE providers (000)									
Program enrolments	138	85	50	52	56	52	49	49	52
Subject enrolments	396	330	386	363	396	390	361	379	407
Training hours	10200	8650	9952	9734	11215	10960	10256	11653	12503
Subjects per program	*3*	*4*	*8*	*7*	*7*	*7*	*7*	*8*	*8*
Training hours per program	*74*	*102*	*198*	*188*	*202*	*210*	*210*	*239*	*239*

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
ACE providers (000)									
Program enrolments	54	38	34	28	28	29	28	29	25
Subject enrolments	445	374	368	308	317	314	315	314	259
Training hours	14066	12305	12548	11044	11548	11261	11052	11138	8045
Subjects per program	*8*	*10*	*11*	*11*	*11*	*11*	*11*	*11*	*10*
Training hours per program	*260*	*322*	*367*	*400*	*407*	*391*	*395*	*378*	*316*

Table 8a: Total ACE VET (excluding FOE 12 - Mixed field programmes) 2015–2020

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
ACE providers						
Program enrolments	82,403	100,445	86,585	81,995	79,965	69,400
Subject enrolments	797,091	1,464,530	1,564,480	1,563,735	1,521,495	1,228,840
Training hours	23,996,381	30,135,600	32,274,000	31,273,200	31,425,840	24,464,160
Subjects per enrolment	*10*	*15*	*18*	*19*	*19*	*18*
Training hours per program	*291*	*300*	*373*	*381*	*393*	*353*

Table 9: Govt-funded program enrolments (excluding FOE 12 – Mixed field programmes) by reporting provider type & level of education 2010–2015; 2016–2020

Provider	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
	no. '000'	%	no. '000'	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
TAFE												
AQF	798.3	59.3	804.9	53.9	808.3	52.5	759.4	52.9	633.5	45.7	493.2	41.3
Non-AQF	57.3	4.3	47.2	3.2	36.3	2.4	34.7	2.4	55.9	4.0	52.0	4.4
Total	855.6	63.6	852.1	57.1	844.6	54.9	794.1	55.3	689.4	49.8	545.2	45.6
OTHER GOVT												
AQF	72.3	5.4	63.2	4.2	53.3	3.5	42.6	3.0	44.7	3.2	42.0	3.5
Non-AQF	0.5	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.0			0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0
Total	72.9	5.4	63.5	4.3	53.6	3.5	42.6	3.0	44.7	3.2	42.2	3.5
ACE												
AQF	47.6	3.5	50.8	3.4	52.3	3.4	37.7	2.6	32.7	2.4	25.7	2.1
Non-AQF	1.1	0.1	1.6	0.1	1.7	0.1	0.5	0.0	1.5	0.1	1.9	0.2
Total	48.7	3.6	52.4	3.5	54.0	3.5	38.2	2.7	34.2	2.5	27.6	2.3
OTHER RTOs												
AQF	365.3	27.2	522.1	35.0	584.5	38.0	559.3	38.9	614.6	44.4	576.6	48.3
Non-AQF	2.7	0.2	2.2	0.1	2.3	0.1	2.4	0.2	2.3	0.2	2.9	0.2
Total	368.0	27.4	524.3	35.1	586.7	38.1	561.7	39.1	616.8	44.5	579.5	48.5
TOTAL PROVIDERS												
AQF	1283.5	95.4	1441.0	96.6	1498.4	97.4	1399.0	97.4	1325.4	95.7	1137.4	95.2
Non-AQF	61.7	4.6	51.3	3.4	40.6	2.6	37.6	2.6	59.7	4.3	57.1	4.8
Total	1345.2	100.0	1492.4	100.0	1538.9	100.0	1436.5	100.0	1385.1	100.0	1194.5	100.0

Provider	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
TAFE										
AQF	509.3	39.7	534.4	44.2	513.0	45.8	544.9	46.1	530.2	42.5
Non-AQF	175.5	13.7	109.4	9.0	80.0	7.1	77.9	6.6	165.1	13.3
Total	684.8	53.4	643.8	53.2	593.0	52.9	622.8	52.7	695.3	55.8
OTHER GOVT										
AQF	37.9	3.0	40.2	3.3	40.4	3.6	47.7	4.0	48.7	3.9
Non-AQF	5.6	0.4	5.6	0.5	6.9	0.6	7.5	0.6	5.8	0.5
Total	43.6	3.4	45.8	3.8	47.3	4.2	55.2	4.7	54.5	4.4
ACE										
AQF	25.3	2.0	24.9	2.1	24.8	2.2	24.3	2.1	22.3	1.8
Non-AQF	3.0	0.2	3.9	0.3	3.2	0.3	5.1	0.4	3.1	0.3
Total	28.4	2.2	28.8	2.4	28.0	2.5	29.4	2.5	25.4	2.0
OTHER RTOs										
AQF	467.7	36.5	431.7	35.7	389.5	34.8	400.1	33.9	393.5	31.6
Non-AQF	57.7	4.5	5.9	4.9	63.0	5.6	73.8	6.2	77.6	6.2
Total	525.4	41.0	491.3	40.6	452.5	40.4	473.9	40.1	471.1	37.8
TOTAL PROVIDERS										
AQF	1040.0	81.1	1031.3	85.2	967.8	86.3	1016.9	86.1	994.8	79.8
Non-AQF	242.0	18.9	178.5	14.8	153.0	13.7	164.3	13.9	251.7	20.2
Total	1282.2	100.0	1209.9	100.0	1120.8	100.0	1181.3	100.00	1246.5	100.0

Table 9a: Total VET program enrolments (excluding FOE 12 – Mixed fields program) by provider type 2015–2020

Provider	2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
	no. '000'	%	no. '000'	%	no. '000'	%	no. '000'	%	no. '000'	%	no. '000'	%
TAFE												
AQF	832.3	29.2	799.3	28.6	776.7	29.5	691.0	28.8	694.6	27.7	649.2	26.5
Non-AQF	35.8	1.3	48.5	1.7	33.3	1.3	19.3	0.8	23.5	0.9	32.2	1.3
Total	868.1	30.5	847.8	30.4	810.0	30.8	710.3	29.6	718.1	28.7	681.4	27.8
UNIVERSITIES												
AQF	65.0	2.3	61.3	2.2	61.2	2.3	59.8	2.5	67.0	2.7	66.3	2.7
Non-AQF	1.2	0.0	0.6	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.1	0.0	1.1	0.0	1.7	0.1
Total	66.2	2.3	61.8	2.2	62.2	2.4	60.9	2.5	68.1	2.7	68.0	2,8
SCHOOLS												
AQF	154.3	5.4	144.6	5.2	138.5	5.3	124.5	5.2	119.8	4.8	119.3	4.9
Non-AQF	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.5	0.0
Total	154.3	5.4	144.7	5.2	138.7	5.3	124.6	5.2	120.2	4.8	119.8	4.9
ACE												
AQF	80.1	2.8	71.3	2.6	72.5	2.8	67.8	2.8	67.9	2.7	59.5	2.4
Non-AQF	2.3	0.1	30.2	1.1	14.6	0.6	15.7	0.7	13.4	0.5	9.9	0.4
Total	82.4	2.9	101.5	3.6	87.1	3.3	82.8	3.4	81.3	3.2	69.4	2.8
ENTERPRISE PROVIDERS												
AQF	62.0	2.2	76.3	2.7	72.5	2.8	64.0	2.7	64.2	2.6	45.4	1.9
Non-AQF	18.7	0.7	18.2	0.7	15.7	0.6	14.0	0.6	16.2	0.6	21.7	0.9
Total	80.7	2.8	94.5	3.4	88.2	3.4	78.0	3.3	80.4	3.2	67.1	2.7
PRIVATE TRAINING PROVIDERS												
AQF	1529.6	53.7	1459.0	52.3	1349.6	51.3	1228.8	51.2	1320.2	52.7	1332.6	53.9
Non-AQF	69.3	2.4	82.1	2.9	97.6	3.7	116.1	4.8	114.7	4.6	114.1	5.1
Total	1598.9	56.1	1541.1	55.2	1447.2	55.0	1344.8	56.0	1434.9	57.3	1446.7	59.0
TOTAL PROVIDERS												
AQF	2723.3	95.5	2611.7	93.6	2471.1	93.8	2233.2	93.1	2333.6	93.2	2262.4	92.3
Non-AQF	127.2	4.5	179.7	6.4	162.3	6.2	165.6	6.9	169.4	6.9	190.0	7.7
Total	2850.6	100.0	2791.4	100.0	2633.4	100.0	2398.8	100.0	2503.0	100.0	2452.4	100.0

Table 10: Govt-funded ACE VET program enrolments (excluding FOE12 – Mixed fields programmes) by reporting provider type & equity group, % of total, 2003–2011; 2012–2020

Equity group / Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Students with a disability (% of total)									
ACE providers	4.6	4.9	5.2	5.5	6.4	7.5	7.9	7.8	8.6
All other providers	5.5	5.8	6.0	6.2	6.1	5.9	6.0	6.2	6.3
Indigenous students as (%of total)									
ACE providers	1.9	2.5	4.2	4.6	6.5	6.5	6.6	8.0	7.5
All other providers	4.2	4.4	4.7	4.9	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.3	5.2
Students from a non-English speaking-background (% of total)									
ACE providers	9.0	9.2	12.7	12.0	11.9	12.6	8.2	9.5	10.5
All other providers	12.8	12.7	12.6	12.9	12.4	13.2	12.7	12.6	13.1
Students from outer regional, remote and very remote regions (% of total)									
ACE providers	N/A	N/A	N/A	13.9	26.2	27.4	33.8	32.3	23.8
All other providers	N/A	N/A	N/A	18.1	20.7	19.8	19.0	18.8	14.9
Students who are unemployed (% of total)									
ACE providers	10.9	14.9	17.9	19.3	21.5	24.8	27.4	29.6	28.8
All other providers	15.8	15.2	13.8	13.2	12.4	12.5	14.8	16.9	18.1
Students not in the labour force (% of total)									
All other providers	11.7	11.0	8.1	8.9	8.7	8.7	6.9	8.1	8.4
All other providers	9.3	9.3	8.8	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.0	9.3	8.9

Table 10: Cont'd

Equity group / Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Students with a disability (% of total)									
ACE providers	8.8	8.5	9.7	11.3	13.6	14.0	13.8	15.6	13.6
All other providers	6.5	6.5	7.1	7.2	8.1	8.2	8.6	9.1	8.3
Indigenous students as (%of total)									
ACE providers	5.5	6.0	7.1	6.6	8.0	7.8	8.5	9.3	7.9
All other providers	5.2	5.2	5.6	6.2	6.7	7.3	7.7	7.8	6.9
Students from a non-English speaking-background (% of total)									
ACE providers	12.8	15.9	17.1	22.6	20.3	21.8	20.9	23.3	24.4
All other providers	13.6	14.7	16.0	15.2	14.7	14.3	13.8	14.5	14.9
Students from outer regional, remote and very remote regions (% of total)									
ACE providers	17.2	20.3	18.0	14.7	16.1	12.0	11.3	12.5	13.4
All other providers	14.7	14.1	13.6	14.9	14.2	14.3	14.1	13.7	13.3
Students who are unemployed (% of total)									
ACE providers	29.6	28.3	36.2	39.0	38.8	43.3	40.2	41.7	38.1
All other providers	17.9	19.6	22.7	21.9	21.3	20.7	19.3	19.7	20.8
Students not in the labour force (% of total)									
All other providers	8.1	7.4	8.3	9.9	11.2	10.9	9.7	10.1	9.9
All other providers	9.0	9.1	8.8	9.0	9.9	10.9	11.1	11.3	10.0

Table 10a: Total ACE VET program enrolments (excluding FOE12 – Mixed fields programmes) by reporting provider type and equity group, % of total, 2003–2020

Equity group / Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Students with a disability (% of total)						
ACE providers	7.9	7.9	9.5	9.7	11.0	10.6
All other providers	5.2	5.5	5.7	5.9	5.9	5.8
Indigenous students as						
ACE providers	6.6	5.7	6.2	6.7	7.3	7.3
All other providers	4.7	4.8	44.9	4.9	5.2	4.8
Students from a non-English speaking-background (% of total)						
ACE providers	14.7	11.8	14.5	15.1	17.2	17.9
All other providers	14.7	15.0	16.6	17.6	18.6	19.5
Students from outer regional, remote and very remote regions (% of total)						
ACE providers	16.6	14.0	13.5	12.8	12.5	12.4
All other providers	13.6	13.0	12.7	11.8	11.3	11.1
Students who are unemployed (% of total)						
ACE providers	26.9	22.6	27.2	26.7	28.6	27.7
All other providers	17.7	17.1	16.1	15.5	7.4	16.0
Students not in the labour force (% of total)						
ACE providers	6.6	6.1	8.7	8.2	7.4	8.8
All other providers	7.7	8.0	8.6	8.9	9.0	8.8

Table 11: ACE VET program enrolments by field of education and level of education –2020

Field of education by program enrolment	Govt funded no.	% Total	TVA no.	% Total
01 - Natural and physical sciences	100	0.2	335	0.4
02 - Information technology	375	1.1	950	1.2
03 - Engineering and related technologies	1015	2.9	2030	2.5
04 - Architecture and building	520	1.5	2140	2.6
05 - Agriculture, environmental and related studies	1385	3.8	2635	3.2
06 - Health	2070	5.9	9555	11.6
07 - Education	2930	8.4	5910	7.2
08 - Management and commerce	1835	5.3	9050	11.0
09 - Society and culture	11915	34.2	25820	31.3
10 - Creative arts	190	0.5	1290	1.6
11 - Food, hospitality and personal services	1965	5.6	5780	7.0
12 - Mixed field programmes	9360	26.9	13160	15.9
Not assigned	1190	3.4	3905	4.7
Program level of education by program enrolment	**Govt funded no.**	**% Total**	**TVA no.**	**% Total**
Diploma or above	2865	8.2	7550	9.1
Certificate IV	5730	16.44	11540	14.0
Certificate III	10650	30.6	27950	33.9
Certificate II	5090	14.6	16490	20.0
Certificate I	4280	12.3	7810	9.5
Non-AQF	6235	17.9	11220	13.6
Total	**34850**		**82560**	
Field of education by subject enrolment	**Govt funded no.**	**% Total**	**TVA no.**	**% Total**
01 - Natural and physical sciences	1180	0.4	3930	1.7
02 - Information technology	1195	0.4	1435	0.4
03 - Engineering and related technologies	7385	2.4	19795	0.6
04 - Architecture and building	5130	1.7	9285	0.7
05 - Agriculture, environmental and related studies	5480	1.8	16980	3.0
06 - Health	23105	7.6	999110	14.8
07 - Education	29875	9.9	24060	4.6
08 - Management and commerce	11005	3.6	117760	2.4
09 - Society and culture	95295	31.5	186790	5.3
10 - Creative arts	995	0.3	21725	3.5
11 - Food, hospitality and personal services	8865	2.9	45595	3.0
12 - Mixed field programmes	43325	14.3	234030	6.9
	69680	23.0		
Program level of education by subject enrolment	**Govt funded no.**	**% Total**	**TVA no.**	**% Total**
Diploma or above	31065	10.3	71370	5.5
Certificate IV	42660	14.1	85645	6.6
Certificate III	89255	29.5	209475	16.1
Certificate II	32460	10.7	106270	8.2
Certificate I	21790	7.2	41935	3.2
Non-AQF level	85290	28.2	787515	60.5
Total	**302515**		**1302215**	

Table 12: Student outcomes survey 2020

2020 Qualification completers	ACE	Private	TAFE	University	Enterprise	School
Achieved main reason for doing the training	83.7	84.5	81.8	80.6	91.6	81.5
Improved writing skills	59.4	50.8	53.5	53.6	44.3	52.0
Improved numerical skills	46.7	42.7	50.0	49.5	35.3	50.5
Developed problem solving skills	81.4	77.8	80.7	81.8	78.7	80.8
Satisfied with teaching	89.4	86.9	87.1	85.1	86.9	88.6
Recommend training provider	85.6	83.6	86.1	84.1	83.2	82.7
Satisfied with overall quality of training	90.4	88.1	88.4	86.9	88.1	90.0
Of those not employed before training: emplloyed after training	34.1	40.0	33.3	34.9	50.3	27.9
Enrolled in further study at a higher level after training	22.2	17.9	25.0	37.1	20.6	29.1

Table 13: Characteristics of ACE VET providers compared to private VET providers

Private RTOs	ACE RTOs
Profit focussed and driven	Not for profit
Responsible to owners, directors, & shareholders	Responsible to a committee and a membership representing the local community
Targets niche training to large areas	Responds to local community needs
Industry focus – often specific industry	Learner focussed
High volume and formal training methodology	Flexible and accommodating to learner needs and issues
Access to private financing, equity and bank loans	Limited access to capital; especially if in council premises
Limited access to teachers, high level of self-paced and assessment only delivery	Small classes with committed teachers, additional learning and educational assistance provided face-to-face
Mostly capable students – often delivering to those in work and in industry settings	Mostly low socio-economic, retrenched, more mature, disabled, CALD, unemployed students
High percentage of income spent on marketing	Student recruitment through outreach and word of mouth
Accredited courses only	Pre-accredited (and entry level accredited)
Often deliver skills building and deepening courses	Mostly delivering foundation skills courses and entry level VET
VET delivery only	VET offered with a range of social supports & services (childcare, counselling, health & wellbeing courses, informal groups, a meeting place)