



Media release

Unlocking Potential: Why ACE Deserves a Place in Australia's Budget

Despite the significant allocation of over \$600 million towards education, skills, and training in the Australian government's budget for 2024/25, there is no explicit support for the Adult Community Education (ACE) sector.

ACE plays a vital role in fostering lifelong learning opportunities, addressing the diverse needs of adult learners at all levels in particular those that need to learn to learn. However, ACE remains the 'Cinderella' of the skills, training and education sector, often overlooked and underfunded despite its immense contribution to adult education, training and skill development.

ACE comprises community learning centres, community colleges, neighbourhood houses, Aboriginal community cooperatives, learn locals, and community service organisations involved in learning and education and other local entities spread across the nation, including urban, regional, rural and remote areas.

‘While other pillars of education such as schools, Vocational Education and Training (VET), and universities receive attention and resources, ACE continues to operate on the fringes, struggling to meet the growing demand for accessible and inclusive learning opportunities for adults’, said CEO Ms Jenny Macaffer.

Integrating ACE as a partner in the harmonisation process with VET and higher education institutions is essential for creating a cohesive and comprehensive learning ecosystem. Recognising ACE as the fourth pillar alongside schools, VET, and universities would ensure that adult learners have access to diverse pathways for skill development and personal enrichment.

Ms Macaffer said, ‘In these critical times, it's imperative for the Australian government to recognise and rectify the longstanding neglect of the ACE sector in its budgetary allocations for 2024/25. By offering explicit support and acknowledgment to ACE, the government can empower adult learners, strengthen communities, and contribute to the nation's social and economic prosperity’.

About Adult Learning Australia

Adult Learning Australia, operating for 60+ years, is the national peak body for the nonprofit adult and community education (ACE) sector. Its membership encompasses both organisations and individuals from every state and territory, representing the sector's diversity.

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