

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Adult Learning Australia Response to the 2025/6 Federal Budget

Adult Learning Australia (ALA), the national peak body for adult and community education, welcomes key investments in skills and vocational education in the 2025–26 Federal Budget.

However, ALA urges the government to recognise and strengthen the role of lifelong learning and community-based education in addressing economic and social challenges.

The Australian Government's 2025–26 Federal Budget introduces several measures aimed at enhancing vocational and higher education.

However, it falls short of addressing the critical challenges facing the adult and community education (ACE) sector and broader community services, as highlighted by the Community Council for Australia and ACOSS, of which ALA is a member.

“While the budget includes apprenticeship incentives, investment to extend fee-free TAFE placements and a one-off 20% reduction on Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debts, these initiatives neglect the community-based education sector, which plays a vital role in providing lifelong and life-wide learning opportunities for disadvantaged and marginalised learners”, said Jenny Macaffer, CEO, Adult Learning Australia.

Despite calls for greater investment in the ACE sector (see [ALA pre-budget submission](#)) to strengthen capacity and support learners outside of mainstream education pathways, the budget fails to:

- Address the funding instability faced by ACE providers, many of whom are struggling to maintain operations amid rising costs and declining resources.
- Recognise the role of ACE in delivering foundational skills, digital literacy, and tailored support to learners who are unable to access TAFE or university education.
- Provide sustained investment in wrap-around services that help disadvantaged learners engage in education and training.
- Commit to a national lifelong learning strategy to ensure all Australians can access education beyond formal schooling and training.

“Without stronger investment in community services and community education, many Australians will continue to face barriers to meaningful participation in work, learning and life”.



The adult and community education sector has a long history of supporting second-chance learners, people from diverse backgrounds, and those needing flexible and supportive learning environments. Without targeted funding and policy recognition, the sector's ability to continue this vital work is at risk.

“We urge the Government to work with the sector to create an education system that recognises learning as a lifelong endeavour, benefiting individuals, communities, and the broader economy.”

### **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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