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20 November 2025

The Hon. Andrew Giles MP
Minister for Skills and Training
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT 2600

Dear Minister Giles,

I read with interest your address to the McKell Institute and commend your commitment to acting to combat the “creeping sense of alienation in large parts of the community, where people feel increasingly disconnected from opportunity and increasingly pessimistic about their future”.

TAFE and VET are vital for skills development and supporting people’s ongoing learning journeys. However, they are not the only tools, and we call on you and the Albanese Government to commit to a broader, whole of government approach to lifelong learning.

As you are aware, adult and community education (both accredited and non-accredited) contributes far beyond skills and training, strengthening social connection, wellbeing, and community resilience. Investing in research to understand the long-term benefits of adult community-based learning, particularly for marginalised young people and older adults with knowledge, skills and experience to share, would help inform policies that truly support communities.

Learning is more than acquiring skills, it’s key to a better future. Developing and implementing data-driven policies through a lifelong learning lens, will help Australians of all ages contribute, adapt, and thrive in a complex and fast-changing world, that for some is very uncertain.

We don’t just want skills and training to build infrastructure, housing, or material goods, we want to build minds: minds that can think critically and compassionately, be creative, and come up with solutions to the growing challenges facing our communities.

Lifelong learning is especially important as individuals and communities face complex issues such as climate change, natural disasters and emergencies, the breakdown of systems, widening inequities, and the challenge of making sense of a fast-moving world.

We encourage you and your government to invest directly in research to understand what works in adult community-based learning, particularly for marginalised young people, those on the sidelines of society and older adults with knowledge and experience to share. Such investment would provide evidence to inform policies that genuinely strengthen communities and support learning initiatives across government and community.

As highlighted in the UNESCO/UIIL Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) reports and the UNESCO Marrakech ALE Statement, which Australia has supported, adult learning and education is central not just to individual development but to inclusive, resilient, and equitable communities. Strengthening evidence in this space would support policies that reflect these global commitments and maximise the impact of community-based learning in Australia.

In October 2025, ALA was the sole Australian civil society representative approved by the Australian Government at the UNESCO/UIIL (GRALE) capacity-building workshop in Shanghai. The workshop brought together representatives from over 14 countries in the Asia Pacific to strengthen understanding of the GRALE 6 survey and establish consistent data and reporting standards. ALA has been meeting with the Department of Education (DOE) and Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) to support Australia's response, ensuring national reporting aligns with international expectations and reflects the realities of community-based adult learning.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to seek your support for funding research into the contribution of the ACE sector, as this is an area vitally under resourced.

We also encourage you to support a national symposium or forum in 2026, facilitated by Adult Learning Australia, bringing together Commonwealth departments and community representatives with responsibility for lifelong learning, particularly adult and community learning from 15 years and beyond. This would help build a shared vision and coordinated approach across government and community.

Yours sincerely



Jenny Macaffer

ALA CEO