



MEDIA RELEASE

Australia's future needs human intelligence as well as artificial intelligence

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Adult Learning Australia (ALA) welcomes the Australian Government's 2026 Intergenerational Report and its focus on preparing Australia for profound economic, technological, demographic and social change.

The Intergenerational Report provides a critical opportunity to consider what Australia needs to do now to ensure, as federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers says, that Australians are "beneficiaries, not victims" of the far-reaching changes underway.

Giving all Australians access to learning opportunities regardless of their age, background or postcode is key to achieving that, said ALA CEO Jenny Macaffer.

"The response by our political leaders and policy makers to the challenges ahead must extend beyond preparing people for changes in the labour market," said Ms Macaffer. "Now more than ever, Australia needs a national lifelong learning strategy to ensure greater investment in human intelligence alongside investment in artificial intelligence, and lifelong learning opportunities alongside skills and training pathways."

"With AI already transforming Australia, people will need more than digital and technical skills to navigate this future. They will also need the capacity to learn, adapt, think critically, participate in their communities, understand difference, contribute to democracy and find meaning and purpose in a rapidly changing world."

UNESCO's Institute of Lifelong Learning has described learning throughout life as essential for "individual fulfilment, social cohesion, and economic prosperity". The OECD's *Education Policy Outlook 2025* also identifies lifelong learning as a foundation for "inclusive, resilient and future-ready societies", underpinning not only economic competitiveness but also social cohesion and individual wellbeing.

"This broader perspective is essential because intergenerational inequality is not the only inequality Australia needs to address. Opportunity is also shaped within generations and across places by where people live, their access to housing, employment, services, digital technology and education, and the circumstances into which they are born," said Ms Macaffer.

"Adult and community education has a vital role to play in meeting these challenges. Place-based learning creates opportunities for people to build skills and confidence, participate in their communities and respond to change where they live. Community organisations, not-for-profits and volunteers are also part of the social and adult learning infrastructure that



helps communities remain connected and resilient, and keeps our democracy strong, particularly when people are experiencing rapid change or competing for scarce resources.”

“A future-focused national strategy must recognise and strengthen this contribution alongside the roles of governments, business and formal education institutions.”

“Australia has significant strengths and, as the Treasurer has said, enormous opportunities. Lifelong learning can help Australians meet change not simply with new skills, but with curiosity, confidence, connection and the capacity to shape a future which benefits our entire community.”

About Adult Learning Australia

ALA is the national not-for-profit peak body for adult and community education (ACE) with over 1,400 members representing all states and territories of Australia; the organisation has been operating for more than 66 years.

For an interview with ALA CEO Jenny Macaffer or more information, please contact info@ala.asn.au or call (03) 9689 8623.

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