



Adult and Community Education (ACE) in Australia

The Ministerial Declaration on Adult and Community Education (MCEETYA, 2008) defines the commitment of all Australian governments to the ACE sector. ACE is defined differently in each state and territory of Australia. Some states support a sector of not-for-profit ACE providers, while others use the term ACE to refer to a set of non-formal programs. Both views of ACE have a strong focus on engaging socially and economically marginalised groups through learning.

South Australia, Victoria and NSW register and provide program funding to the not-for-profit ACE sector. Some other states and territories provide funding support for ACE programs, most notably Tasmania and the ACT.

NUMBER OF ACE ORGANISATIONS

- There are 531 not-for-profit organisations explicitly recognised and funded by the Victorian, NSW and South Australian state governments.
- There are 346 Registered Training Organisation (RTO) providers with registrations by type 'Community Based Adult Education Provider' recorded on the National Register on Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Australia.
- ALA maintains a database of 950 providers who self-identify as ACE organisations.
- There are around 1200 Neighbourhood Houses and Centres in Australia.
- There are 80,000 Australians registered with Universities of the Third Age.

Beyond this, there are a great many community, sporting, social and religious organisations across Australia who have some of the features of ACE or who offer ACE programs.

LEARNERS IN ACE CENTRES

The ACE sector is highly regarded for its ability to engage **young people** in learning, providing them with pathways to further education or employment. The young people who engage in ACE are more likely to be from disadvantaged backgrounds with complex barriers to participation in education and training.

ACE organisations attract high levels of adults from **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)** backgrounds for English language and other programs.

The ACE sector has the potential to be an important contributor to closing the gap between the educational outcomes of **Indigenous people** and those of the rest of the population. The extent to which ACE lives up to this potential varies from provider to provider and state to state. Overall, we know that ACE RTOs enrol Indigenous learners at nearly twice the rate of other VET providers. The picture for non-accredited learning is less clear.

The ACE sector plays an important role in supporting **mature Australians** to continue their learning in a supported environment. ACE supports older learners to extend working life through assisting in upgrading skills and supporting appropriate career transitions. ACE also assists seniors to maintain their health and wellbeing.

People with a disability enrol in ACE RTOs at two and a half times the rate of other providers of VET delivery. There are also high proportions of people with a disability in non-accredited ACE programs.

Thousands of adults each year receive **language, literacy and numeracy** assistance in Australia in community settings. Many choose this form of assistance because they either do not need, or would struggle with, formal accredited courses. Most State and Territory ACE strategies or policy statements recognise the importance of ACE in delivering language, literacy and numeracy.

The ACE sector is recognised for its ability to engage **jobseekers** in foundation and industry skills program as a 'soft point of entry' to VET, often working with the jobseeker to address a broad range of barriers impacting on employability.

READ THE FULL PAPER

<https://ala.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/The-state-of-ACE-2014.pdf>



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