

## Media release

### **Adult Learning Australia calls for foundation skills program in the workplace**

A new report by Adult Learning Australia (ALA) calls on the Australian government to reinstate workplace training in English language, literacy and numeracy skills for Australian workers to improve productivity and efficiency.

Around 44% of Australian adults lack the literacy skills and 55% lack the numeracy skills to cope with the demands of everyday life according to data from 2011-2012 Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC).

Improving workers' language, literacy and numeracy skills on the job benefits employees and businesses through improved flexibility and productivity.

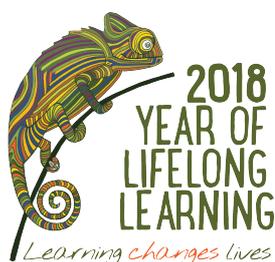
The closure of the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (WELL) by the Australia Government in 2014 has created a vacuum for working Australians who lack the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills to function competently in their jobs.

The report 'Reimagining WELL in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' revives the concept of teaching English language, literacy and numeracy skills in the workplace and the programs needed to help employees meet their current and future employment and training needs.

"The modern economy and society have created new demands for foundation and life skills, including literacy, numeracy and digital capability. Technological advancement and globalisation have decreased the availability of low skilled jobs and increased the number of jobs that require high levels of information processing, digital and communication skills. Adults who are educationally disadvantaged are at even higher risk of being left behind".

ALA is calling for a replacement program to improve opportunities for workers and to help increase workplace sustainability.

While the original WELL program had its flaws, the program was largely seen by industry and language literacy and numeracy (LLN) providers as improving workplace productivity, efficiency and quality, improving individual and team communication,



and building a more informed and flexible workforce. It also better placed business to respond to regulation/legislative requirements and helped to improve relationships between workers and management.

“Our vision is for a workplace model that is based on a set of agreed objectives; one that reflects the feedback from workers, industry, TAFE and Adult and Community Education (ACE), and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), on how to improve outcomes for stakeholders and to ensure that we have a flexible and sustainable model that helps us create a clever and creative society, “ says Jenny Macaffer CEO.

“It is now more important than ever for industry to reap the benefits of alliances within the education sector, with TAFE and with registered training organisations (RTOs) including ACE providers. Many ACE providers deliver both pre-accredited and accredited English language, literacy and numeracy programs in local communities and have strong experience with disadvantaged learners.

“A government commitment to an overall policy of lifelong learning for all Australians, one that includes an ideal framework for improving foundation skills in the workforce through workplace training and education will benefit workers, their families, businesses and the economy, “ says Ms Macaffer.

#### **Media contact**

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