

Media release

ALA launches 'Make It Fair' campaign

Adult Learning Australia has launched a national campaign to pressure major political parties to commit to investing in adult and community education for Australia's most disadvantaged adults.

'Our adult learning system is inequitable and unfair. Public policy is almost exclusively focussed on universities and TAFE, and on skilling the labour force. Australians most in need are deprived of opportunities to re-engage in education, entrenching disadvantage and making them vulnerable to unemployment and social isolation,' Jenny Macaffer, CEO says.

Community based approaches to adult education build a bridge between adults with low skills and learning opportunities. For example, they support unemployed young people who did not finish high school to re-engage with education. They provide new migrants with English language skills. They offer vital support to the 1 in 5 Australians whose literacy skills prevent them from completing everyday tasks. However, adult and community education is severely under-resourced, under valued and availability varies enormously from state to state.

'What's needed is a national approach because the reality is that adult and community education offers the best chance for people in need. It is now more important than ever in the face of rapid technological change, an ageing population and higher demands for literacy in the workplace that all Australians have equitable access to adult and community education', Ms Macaffer says.

A recently released OECD report on adult learning highlights the importance of an inclusive adult learning system in Australia that focusses on attracting adults with low skills into education and training.

'We are calling on the major parties to invest in adult and community education as a crucial part of our national adult learning system.'

Facts and figures

3.3 million Australian adults leave school at Year 10 or earlier (ABS).

Unemployment rates vary according to education level, ranging from 3.2% for people holding a bachelor degree (or higher) to 10.8% for people with Year 10 or less (Mitchell Institute).



60% of young people from low socio economic backgrounds don't complete high school (Mitchell Institute).

1 in 3 Australians struggles to find and keep work because of low literacy (PIAAC).

More than 40% of Aboriginal adults have low literacy (Literacy for Life Foundation).

23% of low skilled Australians are engaged in adult education, compared to 48% of all adults (OECD).

Unemployed adults are 19% less likely to participate in adult education than employed adults (OECD).

In South Australia, adult and community education is expected to provide an economic benefit of up to 6.5 times the investment (SA Govt).

About ALA

Adult Learning Australia is the national peak body for adult and community education with over 1,000 members representing all states and territories of Australia.

Media contact

Visit www.ala.asn.au or call 03 9689 8623 for more information

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