

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT



Adult literacy and numeracy

Literacy and numeracy have a direct impact on people's ability to find and keep jobs, progress in careers, manage their health, participate in society, and make full use of services and opportunities available to them.

Our modern economy and society demand high levels of literacy and numeracy. People with low literacy skills are more vulnerable to unemployment as low skilled jobs disappear in the face of technological change and globalisation.

Modern workplaces demand higher levels of literacy from their workers, including higher levels of information processing, digital literacy and communication. Information and services are increasingly going online so that the disadvantage of being offline grows and leaves people without digital skills at risk of being left behind.

In order to remain in the workforce, access services and actively engage in social and community life adults need to continue to access learning opportunities and build new skills.

HOW LITERATE AND NUMERATE ARE WE?

The OECD's PIAAC survey, which measures key cognitive and workplace skills, found that around 44% of Australian adults lack the literacy skills required in everyday life.

Of these, 1 in 7 Australians (14%) have very poor literacy skills and 1 in 3 (30%) have below-proficiency level literacy making them vulnerable to unemployment. Many more struggle with numeracy, with around 53% of the population at below-proficiency levels.

DEMANDS FOR HIGHER LEVEL LITERACIES

For many Australians the literacy they were taught in school is not enough to keep up with changes in the society we

live in. For example, technological changes have affected workplaces and government services and place higher demands on an adult's capacity to read, process and communicate information.

VULNERABLE GROUPS

- **People aged 45+** had much lower literacy and numeracy than younger adults.
- **Women** performed poorly in numeracy relative to men.
- **People outside the workforce** had much poorer literacy and numeracy compared to those who were working or looking for work.
- **Indigenous Australians;** particularly in remote areas, have lower literacy levels than non-Indigenous Australians.

IMPACT OF IMPROVEMENTS IN LITERACY

- **Individuals:** Better quality of life, job prospects, income level, health and social engagement
- **Families:** Improved performance for children at school
- **Communities:** Greater resilience and wealth
- **Businesses:** Increased productivity

SUCCESSFUL ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS

Educational experts agree that that adults develop their literacy and numeracy skills for particular contexts and in order to get something done either in the workplace, the home or the community. But people with literacy problems can often be reluctant to seek help. Successful adult literacy and numeracy programs need to be practical, purposeful and designed with the individual's needs in mind.

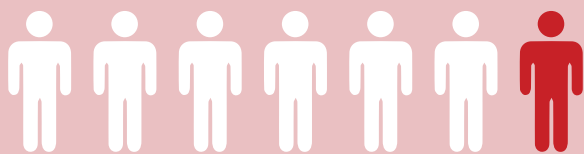
Adult and community education (ACE) literacy programs are successful because they build literacy skills through real life activities such as cooking or home maintenance. They also deliver formal learning programs including certificates in general education for adults and foundation skills.

Most states and territories recognise the importance of ACE in delivering language, literacy and numeracy programs.

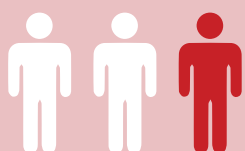
LEARN MORE

Adult literacy and numeracy

<https://ala.asn.au/adult-literacy-and-numeracy/>



1 in 7 Australians (14%) literacy levels are so low they struggle with every tasks.



1 in 3 Australians (30%) have literacy skills that make it difficult for them to find and keep work.



Adult Learning Australia

Lifelong and lifewide learning for all Australians