

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT

Regional and rural Australians



Australia is one of the most urbanised countries in the world, with over two-thirds of the population living in major cities. The population in regional Australia is growing and is predicted to continue to grow. However, this growth is inconsistent across the country, with population decline in many remote inland areas and rapid growth in satellite cities and coastal areas.

Australia has an ageing population and this feature is more pronounced in regional Australia. While around one in five (19%) people in major urban areas are aged over 65, this proportion increases in outer regional and in inner regional areas (21% and 24% respectively).

People in rural and regional parts of Australia are disadvantaged when it comes to access to adult education. In small rural communities adult and community education (ACE) organisations are often the only 'on the ground' providers of post compulsory education.

RURAL AND REGIONAL DISADVANTAGE

18 of the 20 electorates in Australia with the lowest household incomes are outside the capital cities. Further, regional and rural communities have particular features that can leave people stuck in a cycle of poverty and disadvantage. These include:

- reduced access to employment
- reduced access to health services
- transport difficulties
- inadequate local infrastructure
- vulnerability to natural hazards.

A significant proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in regional and rural Australia and, in many very remote communities, they make up the majority of the population.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples generally have poorer health, education and life expectancy than the rest of the population.

EDUCATION IN RURAL AND REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

Young people and adults outside the major cities are less likely to finish high school or to attend university but they are more likely to complete a vocational education and training (VET) qualification.

ADULT COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN RURAL AND REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

Around half of Australia's ACE centres are in rural and regional Australia. These centres vary in size from large community colleges, which offer entry level VET and pre-accredited programs (short courses that offer pathways to further education or work) through to small volunteer-run community education programs.

Not for profit ACE organisations are significant contributors to the economies of regional and rural communities. They exist in towns whose populations couldn't justify the existence of a fully operational TAFE or university campus and the education market is too small to attract private for profit operators. They supplement the work of TAFE and University in other communities.

ACE organisations in rural and regional communities tend to offer a broad range of programs and services alone or in partnership with other agencies of which access to lifelong learning is just one. Services commonly include childcare, job services, emergency relief, community interest groups and social enterprises. An increasing number operate social enterprises such as coffee shops, recycling services and second hand clothing stores, in an attempt to provide employment opportunities and revitalise regional communities.

The ACE sector's flexibility, its ability to partner and adapt, combined with its emphasis on both individual and community needs, makes it a neat fit for regional and rural communities.

ACE plays a unique and important pathway and participation role in regional and rural communities. It has enormous capacity to bridge the gap between the educational and employment opportunities of adults in regional and rural Australia and their city-based counterparts.

LEARN MORE

Inclusive learning culture

<https://ala.asn.au/inclusive-learning-culture/>



**Adult
Learning
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*Lifelong and
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