



Federal election 2022



#AdultEd4All

Adult Learning Australia is calling for a federal government that supports and funds high quality adult education programs that are responsive to community need and make Australia a fairer place for everyone. No matter what our financial situation is, we should all be able to access quality adult education when we need it.

Opportunities to continue to learn throughout our lives are essential — not just for a more knowledgeable workforce — but for our physical and mental well-being, the health of our communities and for a just and democratic society.

Recognise and resource adult and community education

Adult community education (ACE) provides a 'second chance' to many Australians so they can reach their full potential. Regardless of financial or personal circumstances, we should all be able to access quality adult education when we need it.

Inclusive community-based education

Education does not and should not finish with school or university. Every Australian who did not complete school or whose education has been disrupted or cut short deserves a second chance to learn. People who have not benefited from our formal education system or who are socially and economically marginalised have the most to gain from adult community education because it offers pathways to further education and training; helps to break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage and enables people to participate fully in their communities and as citizens in a democratic society.

The Australian government must recognise the significant role of adult community education through a renewed Ministerial Declaration and national policy framework that enables accessible and inclusive adult community education to flourish across all states and territories; particularly small providers in rural and regional areas.



The Australian government should also allocate resources that enable ALA to undertake specific ACE research to map the ACE sector to better inform government policy and decision making and the community.

Develop a national adult literacy strategy

The Australian government must commit to developing and resourcing a national adult literacy strategy that is guided by a broader cross-departmental lifelong learning policy and establishes a framework for increasing the levels of adult literacy by 20% at PIAAC 2031/32.

A national strategy

Adults with low language, literacy, numeracy, and digital skills (LLND) are less likely to be employed or more likely to be employed in low-skilled insecure work. They are at greater risk of redundancy leaving them vulnerable in an age when literacy demands in the workplace are rising.

Living with low literacy diminishes a person's quality of life, ability to participate, self-esteem, and job prospects. People with low LLND skills are also less likely to participate in job-related education and training. Improving people's literacy skills on the job benefits both employees and businesses through improved flexibility and productivity.

The ACE sector plays a crucial role in efforts to improve adult LLND skills by offering flexible, place-based accredited and non-accredited education programs.

A national adult literacy strategy should include funded commitments in line with the recommendations from the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training's Inquiry into adult literacy and its importance. The strategy must include:

- a comprehensive audit of adult LLND education programs around Australia, including non-accredited LLND programs, and which identifies and evaluates effective interventions that target socially and economically marginalised Australian communities, including culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- a framework that ensures programs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are developed and delivered in ways that are consistent with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap
- a national marketing strategy that de-stigmatises adult literacy and numeracy issues in the community and influence national attitudes and behaviours
- collaboration with the states and territories and key community stakeholders.



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Build the capacity of the LLND workforce

Adult educators need access to free high quality professional development that provides them with opportunities to learn in ways that are applicable to their work settings.

High quality professional development

Australia is suffering from a national skills shortage of educators that are qualified to support adults with low language, literacy numeracy, and digital (LLND) skills. The adult LLND workforce is largely casualised; therefore, adult educators need access to free high-quality professional development that provides them with opportunities to learn in ways that are applicable to their work settings.

Adult educators need networks, resources, and professional development that provide pathways into the field and give them access to initial training and ongoing professional development enabling them to provide the best experiences for the people in their programs.

With sufficient resources, Adult Learning Australia can deliver high quality professional development that builds the capacity of the workforce, including both professionals and volunteers.

Prioritise lifelong learning for all

A lifelong learning policy must be a national priority and a centrepiece for all educational policies in order to unlock the true potential of all Australians.

Equitable access to learning

Australia needs a long-term approach to lifelong learning which recognises all learning and the relationship between informal, non-formal and formal learning using a whole of government approach, and which places the learner at the centre. Equitable access to learning requires a lifecycle perspective. Under-served groups must be a priority.

Equally important is the quality of opportunities – diverse learning methods, courses, and settings, particular community settings, that cater for multiple learning needs, and the appropriate resources to support them.

A lifelong learning policy should be developed and implemented as the centrepiece of all education policies in order to provide opportunities for Australians to adapt to the changing economic and social landscape. A lifelong learning policy would also acknowledge learning beyond employment and re-skilling and highlight ACE's role in social mobility, community building, and wellbeing.



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Take action on the Sustainable Development Goals

Australia needs a genuine commitment from the Australian government to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and genuine engagement with the ACE sector to ensure they are working towards those goals.

Action on equity

Australia is a signatory to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 and beyond. Goal Four is the education goal, which aims to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Australia is also a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which has held International Conferences on Adult Education, known as 'CONFINTEA', every 12 years since 1949.

The seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII) will be hosted by Morocco in June 2022. The conference will examine effective adult learning and education policies from a lifelong learning perspective and within the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Conference participants will develop a new framework for action on adult learning and education that will replace the Belém Framework for Action, adopted at CONFINTEA VI in 2009.

To achieve the SDGs, we need a transparent and participatory policy making process that includes consultation with all stakeholders, including not for profits and civil society, to ensure that no one is left behind.

The Australian government should engage with the not-for-profit sector and civil society in the review and reporting on SDG4 Education and Lifelong Learning.

As a signatory to the Belém Framework for Action and the SDGs, the Australian Government should send a delegation to CONFINTEA VII to ensure a genuine commitment to meet the Belém Framework for Action and the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030



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About ALA

ALA has been operating for over 60 years and draws members from across the adult community education sector in all States and Territories, including from Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres, Community Colleges, Aboriginal Learning Cooperatives, University of the Third Age, and other community organisations offering adult education who engage with some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

ALA exists to provide leadership, communication, professional development and advocacy for adult and community education practitioners to advance quality services for all adult learners.

The ACE sector works to build bridges and pathways for people to develop skills for life and work. ACE encourage opportunities for second chance learners, older learners returning to work, CALD and other vulnerable groups; and contributes to building confidence and health and wellbeing in adult learners.

Further information

- [ALA 2022 -23 Prebudget submission](#)
- [Australian Adult Community Education Environmental Scan](#)
- [ALA submission to the House Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training inquiry into adult literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills in Australia](#)
- [UNESCO Belém Framework For Action](#)
- [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#)

Contact

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