

MEDIA RELEASE

New ABS data finds disadvantaged Australians are missing out on adult education

Australians have an appetite for learning that is focussed on developing work and life skills over formal qualifications, new research shows. But those who can most benefit from adult education are being left behind, according to Adult Learning Australia's CEO Jenny Macaffer.

The recent release of ABS data about Australians' participation in non-formal adult education as well as the numbers studying for formal post-secondary qualifications found more Australians were engaged in non-formal learning (27%) than in studying for formal qualifications (21%).

But access to non-formal adult education depends on where you live and how much you earn. People living in rural and regional areas are twice as likely to cite lack of availability of courses as the reason for not participating. People on low incomes are twice as likely to cite financial barriers to taking part, including access to affordable childcare for women.

'Adult education is a powerful enabler helping people to overcome disadvantage, break the cycle of poverty, move into more secure work and participate more fully in a democratic society,' says Ms Macaffer.

'Whether it's improving your job search techniques, getting help with reading and writing, taking a class to improve your health or well-being or improve your English language skills, non-formal learning improves social cohesion, opens up pathways to further study, formal education and work. It makes sense for our communities, our society and our economy.'

'ALA is calling on the Australian government to develop a national policy on lifelong learning, one that recognises the crucial role of non-formal education in opening pathways towards more formal training and work, particularly for those Australians whose formal education has been cut short or disrupted and those in rural and regional areas.

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About ALA

Adult Learning Australia is the national not for profit peak body for adult learning and community education with over 1,000 members representing all states and territories of Australia.

Source

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) [Work-Related Training and Adult Learning, Australia, 2020-21 financial year.](#)



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