

Jobs and Skills Summit 1 - 2 September 2022

Parliament House Canberra

Not everyone is ready to learn. For many adults returning to learning or taking up work is a big step. Some of the most successful initiatives for people who are hard-to-reach and disengaged are delivered through adult community education.

This not-for-profit sector works with disadvantaged cohorts, such as adults with low literacy and numeracy¹ to support them to:

- transition back into learning
- develop basic skills for work
- improve foundation skills
- pathway into formal learning programs.

Community providers are a key part of education and training and embedded in our urban, regional, rural and remote communities. Its workforce and volunteers are largely women who contribute to the wellbeing of the adults they work with as well as their local communities.

For example, in Nhill in regional Victoria, a community provider worked with Luv a Duck processing plant to develop essential foundation skills for 70 workers. In WA, a volunteer literacy program has supported 100s of adults with low literacy to find work. In NSW, community providers have delivered training programs for people to find work off the farm in tough times.

Despite the important role that the adult community sector plays in educating some of Australia's most disadvantaged groups, the sector lacks recognition and resources. Support and development for not-for-profit community education must be part of a national jobs and skills strategy.

The recent Parliamentary Inquiry into Adult Literacy and its importance highlighted the crucial role of adult community providers in reducing barriers to education and training, and in promoting a culture of lifelong learning.

So how is the government going to support disadvantaged adults like people with low literacy and numeracy skills who are locked out of work, education and life opportunities?

How will the government support adult community education as a vital part of the education and training system that works with some of the most disadvantaged people in Australia?

¹ Parliament of Australia, House Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, Inquiry into Adult literacy and its importance, Don't take it as read report 2022 - One in five adult Australians have low literacy and/or numeracy.¹ This means that around three million adults do not have the skills to meet the demands of work and life.² ABS PIAAC 2013