

National Jobs and Skills Summit

About

The National Jobs and Skills Summit brings together Australians, including unions, employers, civil society and governments, to address shared economic challenges. The Summit and subsequent Employment White Paper will focus on:

- keeping unemployment low, boosting productivity and incomes
- delivering secure, well-paid jobs and strong, sustainable wages growth
- expanding employment opportunities for all Australians including the most disadvantaged
- addressing skills shortages and getting our skills mix right over the long-term
- improving migration settings to support higher productivity and wages
- maximising jobs and opportunities from renewable energy, tackling climate change, the digital economy, the care economy and a Future Made in Australia
- ensuring women have equal opportunities and equal pay.

The Summit will recommend immediate actions and opportunities for medium and long-term reform. Summit outcomes will also inform the Employment White Paper which will help shape the future of Australia's labour market and Treasury will invite submissions and engage the wider community over the next 12 months.

Our statement

This Summit is an opportunity to bring an 'equity lens' to skills shortages and find solutions to the systemic problems that are compounding disadvantage for people with poor access to training and workforce opportunities.

Community-based adult education providers have a strong record offering accredited vocational education and training, foundation skills, personal enrichment and pathway programs. The adult community education sector is well-placed to prepare people who are disadvantaged and marginalised for entry into further study and/or the workforce.

The Summit presents an opportunity to advance Australia's national social and economic goals through programs that target educational disadvantage. Long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, First Nations peoples, CALD and new migrants, older Australians, adults with low formal education or low literacy face discrimination and additional hurdles that can put them at the back of the jobs queue.

Community-based adult education providers deliver strong outcomes for disadvantaged groups in VET, which is supported by National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER) data. They also provide non-accredited learning programs that build the crucial literacy, numeracy and foundation skills needed for work, study and successful participation in social and community life.

To achieve the goals of the Summit, 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.



ALA looks forward to contributing to the Summit and playing an active role in building a stronger and more inclusive workforce and society.

Our calls to action

Commit to ensuring that all adults have sufficient literacy, numeracy and foundation skills to participate fully in work, study and life.

All adults, young and old, need sufficient literacy, numeracy and foundation skills to participate fully in work, study and life. Literacy, numeracy and foundation skills are extremely important across all jobs and industries. Higher levels of literacy, numeracy and foundation skills are now required to get and keep a job.

Data shows that there is a mismatch between the literacy, numeracy and foundations skills that people have and what they need to participate in work, study and life¹.

Literacy, numeracy and foundation skill development for vulnerable Australians is a key strength of the ACE sector because ACE organisations work with a range of local agencies to offer wraparound support and for the benefit of adult learners. They develop initiatives to address entrenched disadvantage in their communities.

The ACE sector offers both workplace orientated and non-vocationally based literacy, numeracy and foundation skills education programs.

The UN's 2030 SDG 4.6 target, which Australia has committed to, is to ensure all young people and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

Key priorities

1. Implementing the recommendations of the House Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training's Parliamentary Inquiry into Adult Literacy report 'Don't Take it As Read' including developing a resourced national adult literacy strategy.
2. Investing in building and strengthening a national adult community education sector; focussing on supporting literacy, numeracy and foundation skills demands in all jurisdictions for vulnerable cohorts.

Recognise and invest in the adult community education sector

Not everyone is ready for VET or work. Many adults need the right supportive environment that is accessible, local and learner centred – such as community-based education providers.

Non-accredited pathway programs in community settings can provide wraparound support and environments where people learn to learn. These non-accredited pathways often work best for people who have dropped out of school early, have literacy or language issues, have a disability, lack confidence or have been unemployed for a long period. Women are

¹ PIAAC data indicates around 43% of Australian adults lack the literacy skills required for everyday life. Of these, 14% have very poor literacy skills and 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.

more likely to come through these programs because of their other associations in the community such as childcare.

Key priorities

1. Recognising non-accredited pathway programs in the community sector for their potential as a pipeline to accredited qualifications for disadvantaged cohorts.
2. Renewing and resourcing the Ministerial Declaration on Adult Community Education to enable the continuity and longevity of ACE providers so that they will be well placed, not only to support Australians as part of jobs and skills but through lifelong learning to help maximise the pandemic recovery process for Australia into the future.

Build the capacity of adult educators and the literacy numeracy and foundation skills workforce

There is a lack of sufficiently skilled adult literacy educators to meet growing needs to support adults with low language, literacy numeracy, and digital (LLND) skills.

The adult LLND workforce is largely casualised. They need access to free high-quality professional development that provides them with opportunities to learn in ways that are applicable to their work settings. The TAE LLN component isn't sufficient for educators supporting adults with complex literacy needs.

Adult educators need networks, resources and professional development that provide pathways into the field and enable the best experiences and outcomes for their learners.

Key priorities

To sustain the adult literacy educator workforce, we need incentives and resources that:

1. provide access to initial training programs that address the national skills shortage of qualified adult LLND educators
2. support ongoing professional development that builds workforce capacity across non-accredited and accredited provision

Provide opportunities for adult community education to increase pathways into trades and training, particularly for women

Adult community education programs attract large percentages of women. This presents an opportunity to engage women in community sector introductory trades training programs and taster courses.

Key priorities

1. Investing in ACE introductory trades training programs.
2. Researching the potential of ACE to develop more preparation/introductory programs in this area, particularly for women.

Lifelong learning for all

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. It must ensure that no one is left behind and that the system does not further alienate people who are already vulnerable and disadvantaged or widen the equity gap

Key priorities

1. Develop a national framework for lifelong learning that empowers individuals as motivated and capable lifelong learners and sustains and transforms communities.
2. Use technology to extend learning environments and transform the way we learn.
3. Develop the workplace as a key learning environment that underpins economic objectives through partnerships and networks that create an inclusive learning society.
4. Invest in Australia's future by fostering a culture that encourages and supports learning, creativity, innovation and opportunities for all.
5. Acknowledge learning beyond employment and re-skilling and highlight adult community education's role in social mobility, community building, and wellbeing.

The Summit is an opportunity for Australia to show leadership by committing to an education and training sector that is flexible enough to meet everyone's needs and abilities, and has the potential to transform our future.

About ALA

Adult Learning Australia is the national not for profit peak body for adult and community education with over 1,400 members representing all states and territories of Australia; the organisation has been operating for more than 62 years. Membership includes adult and community learning centres; learn locals; community colleges; neighbourhood houses; TAFEs; Aboriginal health and community service agencies involved in education, skills and training; libraries and local governments, including UNESCO endorsed learning cities; and individual adult educators and academics.

About ACE

The ACE sector plays a significant role in positively contributing to the socio-economic status of our communities and offers accessible lifelong learning opportunities that respond to the needs of adults within local communities. ACE provision includes formal vocational and education training (VET), adult basic education (foundation), as well as personal interest learning (enrichment).²

² ALA's [Australian Adult Community Education Environmental scan](#) profiles the sector in terms of its programs, features, provider types, participants, outcomes and supporting policy areas. It also explores the challenges facing the sector in terms of sustainability and provides a summary profile by state and territories



Contact

Jenny Macaffer | Chief Executive Officer

Adult Learning Australia
45 Moreland St
FOOTSCRAY VIC 3011

03) 9689 8623 | 0488 030 073

j.macafer@ala.asn.au