



ADULT
LEARNING
AUSTRALIA



Prebudget submission 2023

equitable access to learning for all Australians
to support social cohesion and economic
prosperity

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INTRODUCTION

This submission outlines recommendations that Adult Learning Australia (ALA) believes will significantly strengthen Australia's adult community education (ACE) sector to support our communities build socio-economic capital and drive real economic savings for government. These measures have been informed by ALA's 63 years of work in this field, recent member surveys and consultations with Australian adult education providers across the sector.

ALA welcomes the Albanese Government's engagement with the community sector and appreciates the opportunity to participate in the newly formed VET Workforce Blueprint Advisory Committee and the Foundation Skills Advisory Group.

A government committed to building economic and social resilience and productivity across our communities will actively encourage and invest in more effective and efficient community organisations delivering better outcomes for our local communities.

ALA is pleased to have this opportunity to provide input into the Federal Budget process and to engage in discussions about any issues this submission raises.

ALA is calling for the Australia government to support and fund high quality adult education programs that are responsive to community need and make Australia a fairer place for everyone.

According to the UNESCO's [*Fifth Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*](#) the ultimate twenty-first century skill is the ability to learn. The report found that the main challenge for adult learning and education across the globe is to reach those who need it most.

Everyone should have access to quality adult education when they need it, including adult community education (ACE).

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 civil society.

ALA is an active member of both the Community Council Australia and the Australian Council of Social Services and endorses the recommendations in their prebudget submissions to the Australian Government.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We need a national approach that is fairer and includes adult education programs that build a bridge between adults with low skills and lifelong learning opportunities.

The reality is that those most in need are deprived of opportunities to re-engage in education, entrenching disadvantage and making them vulnerable to unemployment and social isolation.

ALA is calling for:

- 1. A national lifelong learning policy supported by a twenty year plan**
- 2. Recognition and investment in adult community education**
- 3. A national adult literacy and numeracy strategy**
- 4. Creation of an inclusive learning culture**
- 5. Support for adult learning for climate action and sustainable development**

ABOUT US

ALA is the national not for profit peak body committed to ensuring that all Australians can access the benefits of lifelong and lifewide learning and is a strong advocate for adult and community education (ACE). ALA has been operating for more than 63 years and comprises organisational and individual members in all states and territories who reflect the diversity of ACE.

ALA exists to provide leadership and professional development that advances quality services for all adult learners who reflect the diversity of adult learning and community education, including community learning centres, community colleges, neighbourhoodhouses, TAFEs, and other adult education institutions.

ALA is a well-regarded and trusted long-term leader in the field of adult learning and community education.

Our vision is for equitable access to learning for all Australians to support social cohesion and economic prosperity.

ABOUT ACE

The ACE sector focusses on the needs of the adults in the particular community in which it operates. ACE's starting point is to provide learning opportunities that meet the needs of adults in local communities, and to build local capacity for community development and resilience.

ACE organisations are often the only 'on the ground' providers of post-school education in local neighbourhoods and small rural locations. They exist in towns and communities with small populations that can't sustain a TAFE or university campus, or where the education market is too small to attract private for-profit operators. In larger communities, they supplement the work of a TAFE or university by offering non-accredited and accredited VET pathway programs and provide a range of VET courses to a range of adult learners.

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). ACE programs offer vital support to the 1 in 7 Australians whose literacy skills prevent them from completing everyday tasks.

ACE Values

ACE takes a strong advocacy role to ensure local learning needs are met.

ACE has a welcoming, caring and non-judgmental culture to facilitate access for everybody and provides learning programs in friendly, community settings that cater for adults of varying abilities and backgrounds.

ACE seeks to be a gateway for all adults to return to learning at any stage along the learning continuum no matter their age, gender, culture, ability or previous educational experience or attainment.

ACE starts where the learner is at, providing learning programs build on their existing skills and knowledge and delivering desired new knowledge and skills and other outcomes, including motivation to go on to bigger and better opportunities.

ACE programs embrace the principles of best practice delivery of learning programs to 'difficult to reach cohorts', including:

- non-formal learning opportunities alongside formal learning
- pathways to further education, training, and employment, including TAFE and LL RTOS
- pathways to employment
- flexible and learner-focused andragogy
- innovative programs designed in response to local needs
- social connections to build better and stronger communities
- awareness of diversity and promotion of connected communities
- key training in adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

A learner-centred approach

The ACE sector has a learner centre focus and is an enabler of inclusive learning.

ACE recognises that there is no 'traditional student', only a spectrum of learners with needs and preferences to be considered a learner-responsive pedagogical design.

ACE is about learning approaches that engage adults in the process and foster personal, social and intellectual development.

ACE uses adult learning principles that encourage learners to take ownership of the learning process through active participation; hands-on learning and real-time demonstration of skills; co-learning through shared tasks and appraising their experiences and changes in their perceptions, goals, confidences and motivations for learning in the future.

ACE providers are community owned and managed, not for profit organisations that have adult education as a primary focus.

They are highly networked within their local communities; particularly with human services providers.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Start first with recognising and investing in adult community education and lifelong learning.

1. Develop a National Lifelong Learning Policy and a Twenty Year Plan

Australia is one of 193 countries that has signed onto the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs), which identifies 17 goals to achieve a better and more sustainable future.

The SDGs are a call to action for partners across the globe to unite to end poverty, improve health and education, reduce inequality and tackle climate change. SDG 4 addresses inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all, both in Australia and across the region through Australia's aid investments.

A lifelong learning policy must be a national priority to unlock the true potential of all Australians. Australia needs a long term approach to lifelong learning which recognises the relationship between informal, non-formal and formal learning using a whole of government approach.

Resilient and equitable lifelong learning communities must be developed to meet the learning demands of the modern workplace and society; improve productivity and realise the full potential of everyone in our communities.

According to the OECD, lifelong learning is about creating 'a society of individuals who are motivated to continue learning throughout their lives – both formally and informally'. But there are big challenges in terms of equity particularly where an individual's motivation or ability to learn is impacted by social, cultural or economic circumstances.

Technology has already transformed the workplace and society and will continue to do so in ways we don't yet understand. Lifelong learning is now necessary for people to adapt to change and build the skills and knowledge they need to live rich and fulfilling lives. Adults without access to lifelong learning opportunities are at risk of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.

Lifelong learning communities embed a culture of learning and strengthen pathways to further learning and wellbeing through collaboration, engagement and advocacy.

Lifelong learning communities promote learning as an activity that can take place anywhere not just in formal learning settings. Lifelong learning communities mobilise their resources to foster a culture of empowerment, social inclusion, prosperity and sustainability through learning.

Lifelong learning communities are committed to:

- offering opportunities for learning throughout life
- meeting the learning needs of individuals
- developing engaged, flexible and adaptable learners
- providing systems of support and improvement
- improving community infrastructure to meet these goals.

Lifelong learning must be a priority of all levels of government. A national policy can help guide our future steps so that we learn best how to meet the many challenges before us. A commitment to lifelong learning can help encourage a more inclusive system that caters to at risk cohorts facing economic and societal polarisation like those with low literacy, numeracy, and digital skills.

Recommendations

ALA is calling for:

- a formal lifelong learning policy that acknowledges learning beyond employment and re-skilling, and highlights its role in social mobility, community building and wellbeing
- a formal lifelong learning policy that highlights the role of the ACE sector in meeting key equity objectives of lifelong learning in Australia
- support for community learning initiatives particularly in areas with high populations of disadvantaged adults, in collaboration with local government, ACE organisations, libraries, ALA and other related community organisations
- a community learning centre in every regional, rural and remote Australian town without access to a TAFE or University campus
- funded lifelong adult learning programs delivered in ACE settings on important areas of public debate such as the digital divide, moving to a lower carbon future, immigration, multiculturalism and positive ageing
- demographic, geographic, social and economic research on the role of adult and community education in building lifelong learning communities.

2. Recognise and Invest in Adult Community Education

We need to ensure everyone has access to high quality learning opportunities throughout their lives that they can adapt to changing social and economic circumstances and to the ever-evolving job market. ACE must be formally recognised in public policy for its role in providing accessible learning opportunities for adults in local communities that meets their needs and supports place-based community development.

ACE was first recognised in the 1944 Universities Commission Report by W. G. K. Duncan and again in the 1991 Senate Inquiry which produced the [‘Come in Cinderella: the emergence of adult and community education’](#) report. A follow-up report in 1997, [‘Beyond Cinderella: towards a learning society’](#), looked at the structural and policy changes at Commonwealth level in adult education.

Commonwealth and state and territory ministers with responsibility for education endorsed the first national Ministerial Declaration on Adult Community Education in 1993. Updated statements were subsequently endorsed in 1997, 2002 and finally in 2008. Since then, there has been no formal recognition by the Australian Government of the role of ACE on our skills, training and education systems.

A renewed national Ministerial Declaration would recognise ACE as a significant contributor in both accredited VET and non-accredited education that fosters the skills people need to fully engage and participate in their communities and the economy. ACE is a valuable community asset that can offer a transformative base for adult learners, their families and wider communities.

Current government policy must recognise ACE as a crucial sector of the post-school education system, acknowledge its role in retraining and reskilling Australians, and in providing pathways to work and further learning and outline strategies and resources to support ACE organisations to

implement the objectives; particularly small providers in rural and regional areas. It has expertise in providing accessible learning opportunities in local communities and collaborating with other post-secondary education providers and local support services and networks.

According to 2022 student outcomes data released by the [National Centre for Vocational Education Research](#) (NCVER), Australian ACE providers have the best results with engaging students from unemployment into employment.

NCVER data also indicates that the largest number of enrolments at ACE providers in government-funded VET were students from SEIFA quintile 1 (the most disadvantaged) and SEIFA quintile 2, which is around 10% higher than all other providers.

ALA released its [Australian Adult Community Education Environmental scan](#) in 2022. The scan profiles the sector 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.

ACE is a discrete fourth sector of education in Australia that is not for profit and community based. Research shows that ACE providers offer a platform for disengaged and/or disadvantaged adults to:

- transition back into learning
- develop basic skills for work
- improve language, literacy and numeracy
- pathway into formal learning programs.

ACE programs build community capacity, enhance social cohesion and promote health and wellbeing. They foster skill development and provide vocationally focussed education and training programs and pathways. ACE enables inclusive learning by recognising a broad spectrum of learners with individual needs and preferences. ACE learning programs are highly focussed and offered in a friendly, flexible and supportive environment.

ACE continues to be marginalised in terms of policy and resources despite its recognised ability to provide lifelong learning opportunities that are both accessible and inclusive.

These issues are exacerbated by a severely under-resourced and undervalued ACE sector, which is more important now than ever in the face of climate change, COVID, rapid technological change, an ageing population and higher demands for literacy in the workplace.

There is a clear need to build an effective long-term resilient workforce, ensuring an inclusive system of equity that mitigates economic and societal polarisation – especially for vulnerable communities like those with low literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. With an identified national skill shortage (DEWR, 2022) there is a need to engage hard-to-reach adults so that they have opportunities to gain skills for employment - this is where the contribution of the ACE sector is critical.

To enable the sustainability of the ACE sector - the ACE workforce must receive continuing professional development to update their knowledge, skills and abilities to perform their role in a changing environment.

Recommendations

ALA is calling for:

- a renewed Ministerial Declaration on ACE that gives formal recognition of ACE as a discrete fourth sector of education in Australia, offering accessible learning opportunities for adults in local communities that meet their needs and support place-based community development
- recognition of the role played by ACE providers in attracting and supporting key equity groups through the provision of community service obligation funding
- specific and complementary roles for not for profit community providers, the public TAFE system and for profit providers
- pathways and foundation skills funding primarily offered to ACE and TAFE providers
- funding support for Adult Learning Australia to:
 - provide professional development to support and strengthen the ACE workforce
 - continue to coordinate Adult Learners' Week annually, and
 - map and measure the extent of ACE across Australia and the capability/capacity of the sector to contribute effectively to work and further education considering ACE's distinct but complementary role to TAFE and higher education.

3. Develop a National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

The right to literacy is an inherent part of the right to an education. All adult Australians, regardless of their employment or social status, should be supported to fully develop their language, literacy and numeracy skills.

Results from the Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies ([PIAAC](#)) survey last undertaken in 2010/11 found that around 1 in 7 Australians (14%) have very poor literacy skills and 1 in 3 (30%) Australians have literacy skills low enough to make them vulnerable to unemployment and social exclusion (refer policy 4).

All Australians, regardless of their employment status, must be supported to develop their literacy and numeracy skills to achieve productivity gains and to ensure they can live healthy, autonomous and full lives. They also need sufficient literacy to comprehend health information, understand government information and services, get job ready and maintain social connections; which is particularly important now through COVID-19.

In order to compete in the global knowledge-based economy and to maintain the level of prosperity and social cohesion that Australians need and expect, the language, literacy and numeracy levels of the adult population must be at the forefront of public policy.

It is now more important than ever for industry to reap the benefits of alliances within the education sector, with TAFE and with registered training organisations (RTOs) including ACE providers. Many ACE providers deliver both pre-accredited and accredited English language, literacy and numeracy programs in local communities and have strong experience with disadvantaged learners.

Improving workers' language, literacy and numeracy skills on the job benefits employees and businesses through improved flexibility and productivity. The closure of the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (WELL) by the Australian Government in 2014 has created a vacuum for working Australians who lack the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills to function competently in their jobs.

The modern economy and society have created new demands for foundation and life skills, including literacy, numeracy and digital capability. Technological advancement and globalisation have decreased the availability of low skilled jobs and increased the number of jobs that require high levels of information processing, digital and communication skills. Educationally disadvantaged adults are at even higher risk of being left behind.

ALA awaits the Australian Government's response to the recommendations of the House Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training's Parliamentary Inquiry into Adult Literacy. ALA submitted and was invited to present at an Inquiry hearing. The Committee made 15 recommendations to improve adult language, literacy, numeracy and digital (LLND) skills, including implementing a national LLND strategy, building the capacity of the LLND workforce, funding the ACE sector to deliver sustainable non-accredited LLND programs, and expanding the roll out of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) which has now been allocated to research in Jobs and Skills Australia.

ALA welcomes the Government's commitment to reinvigorating foundation skills programs to support workers and vulnerable Australians to gain secure employment choices, working in partnership with states, territories and stakeholders. And also pleased to be participating in the Australian Government's Foundation Skills Advisory Group. Modern workplaces require workers with high levels of language, literacy and numeracy, and the capacity to problem solve in technology-rich environments.

However, adult language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills are more than foundation skills for training, productivity and work. Today Australians need proficiency in complex modes of communication and high levels of digital literacy. A lack of language, literacy and numeracy impacts all aspects of an adult's life and has intergenerational effects on families, children and communities and can lead to social exclusion.

Recommendations

As a key pillar of a National Lifelong Learning Policy and Plan develop and resource a whole of government national adult LLND strategy, in collaboration with the states and territories and key stakeholders that is targeted and resourced, and which prioritises social and economically marginalised communities and that establishes a framework for increasing the level of adult literacy by 20% at the reinstatement of PIAAC 2031/32.

ALA is calling for:

- recognition of the contribution of non-accredited language, literacy and numeracy courses for both personal development and social capital through funding support
- provision of opportunities for adults with barriers to learning to develop their language, literacy and numeracy skills to build their confidence and contribute to our diverse and changing society and economy
- investment in a national family literacy strategy focussed on socially and economically marginalised Australian communities and schools with large numbers of Indigenous students
- a funded workplace English language, literacy and numeracy program that addresses workforce LLN requirements to ensure that we have a flexible and sustainable model that helps us create a clever and creative workforce and society
- funded ACE environments that support adults with low digital and health literacy
- professional development that supports and strengthens the adult LLN workforce and a commitment to addressing the national skills shortage of qualified adult LLND educators and strengthening the capacity of the workforce, both professionals and volunteers
- implementation of a comprehensive marketing strategy that de-stigmatises adult literacy and numeracy issues in the community and influence national attitudes and behaviours
- a comprehensive audit of the current provision of adult literacy education programs around Australia (both accredited and non-accredited education programs) that identifies and evaluates effective interventions in adult literacy education including community based programs.

4. Create an Inclusive Learning Culture

Australia cannot achieve its wider strategic interests without a fundamental commitment to the comprehensive education agenda, which is explicitly identified in United Nations Sustainable Development Goal SDG 4 – ‘Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.’

All adult Australians must have access to learning environments that embrace an inclusive learning culture, which means valuing and respecting difference and empowering them to reach their full potential.

Research shows us that people who disengage from education are disproportionately disadvantaged. Currently, 1 in 8 Australian students do not finish Year 12, and completion rates are worse for low

socioeconomic status (SES) students in low SES communities. This places them at higher risk of being disengaged from full-time work, study or training for most of their lives.

In rural and regional areas, students have less access than their urban counterparts to education services. They are less likely to complete Year 12; less likely to go to university and more likely to drop out if they enrol.

There has been some improvement in terms of the Closing the Gap education targets for Indigenous people, but the data is not disaggregated, which can effectively mask issues particularly in regional and remote locations.

Health, education and employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians continue to be worse than for non-Indigenous people. There is a close association between low levels of education and incarceration for Indigenous Australians. In fact, there are serious gaps between Indigenous Australians and the rest of the population in terms of incarceration, death by suicide, substance abuse and mental health.

With the Voice to Parliament campaign about to begin it is worth noting that ALA's forerunner organisation the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education (AAACE) ran the Reconciliation Study Circles Project in 1993/4 and developed a [resource kit](#) for community use. The kit could assist in building a base for the current campaign by launching a renewed community education action program through ALA.

High levels of psychological distress are associated with lower income, lower educational attainment and unemployment. Each year, 1 in 5 (20%) of Australians aged between 16 and 85 will experience a mental health condition. The economic cost of mental health conditions to Australia is significant, with estimates ranging up to \$40 billion a year.

Australians with a disability are more likely to be unemployed compared to those without a disability (10.0% compared with 5.3%). 36% of people with a disability aged 18–64 years have completed Year 12, compared with 60% for those without a disability. 45% of people with a disability in Australia are living either near or below the poverty line. This is more than double the OECD average of 22%.

Older Australians continue to miss out on the benefits of the digital economy and Internet tools that could help them manage their lives better and support them to overcome some of the physical, psychological and social barriers that accompany ageing. While the digital divide is narrowing in Australia, divisions persist for those who also experience other forms of social inequity, including vulnerable older people, who are poor, unemployed, have low educational attainment, have a disability, are Indigenous, were born in non-English speaking countries and/or live in rural and regional areas.

Learning empowers people. It offers strong social returns in productivity, community participation, political awareness and active citizenry. In a rapidly changing society, with technological advances and growing inequalities, adults must have the opportunity to gain and build their skills and knowledge in order to make informed choices and improve their lives.

Research shows that inclusive learning environments need:

- strategic outreach
- ongoing engagement
- tailored support

- a flexible learning environment.

Recommendations

ALA is calling for:

- funded youth learning programs that encourage aspiration and agency
- strategies that link people with community-based, flexible and high quality education, training and pathways to employment
- funded adult learning programs that are accessible to people with mental health conditions and/or people with physical disabilities
- incorporation of adult and community education into mental health and disability programs as an integral part of community health, rather than as an external program
- funded adult education programs for older Australians that encourage productive ageing
- infrastructure funding for local sites of adult learning practice in Indigenous communities such as youth media centres, neighbourhood houses or community learning centres and learning circles
- funded ACE formal and non-formal education and training programs for offenders on community based orders
- funding for ALA to build on the previous Reconciliation study circles kit to engage community groups to discuss and build understanding of the Uluru Statement and Voice to Parliament.

5. Support Adult Learning For Climate Action and Sustainable Development

The need to realise the benefits of planned reform has never been more urgent. The World Economic Forum recently published [The Global Risks Report 2023](#) that explores a range of severe risks we could face over the coming decade. The report identifies potential poly-crises which bring together simultaneous problems: cost of living, food shortages, climate change, geopolitical fragmentation, enduring impact of pandemic, technology driven inequalities, declining human rights, increasing societal vulnerabilities and erosion of our future resilience. It also considers opportunities to mitigate the risks and collective actions to improve future outcomes.

Even with the promises of greater enactment of climate policies and mitigation by this government more needs to be done. More action and resources must go into funding disaster prevention, preparedness, and recovery. Investment in ACE can help educate some of the most affected communities and prepare them to collaboratively build knowledge in response to the many disruptions of the climate crisis.

Public policy must support the development of a skilled population who can make judicious and well-informed decisions about sustainability in their homes, communities, workplaces and leisure activities.

There are complex challenges to our environmental systems that support all life on our planet. Education for sustainable development is about incorporating environmental challenges into learning processes. It requires a strong focus on:

- Creating a sustainable future
- Citizen and participatory action
- Awareness raising and reflection
- Influencing decision-makers.

Adult learning for climate action and sustainable development is about developing the knowledge, skills, understanding and values to act responsibly. It is about understanding the impact of what we do today on humanity and the planet in the future. It uses a framework of lifelong learning for everyone, at different life stages and in learning contexts.

This means developing the knowledge, skills, understanding and values to participate in decisions about the way we do things, locally and globally, to improve quality of life without damaging the planet.

Sustainability also involves working towards alleviating poverty, upholding human rights and committing to equity in all forms of education – formal, non-formal and informal.

Our latest special edition [Australian Journal of Adult Learning](#) (AJAL) focuses on Adult Learning for Climate Action and puts the spotlight on the need for a direct focus on adult education to tackle the climate crisis. It explores the diverse approaches that adult educators and communities are taking to help address the issues and where local transformations are taking place.

Adult learning for climate action and sustainability means offering adult learning programs that are:

- relevant at a local level
- culturally appropriate
- learner-centred
- collaborative
- participatory
- self-sustaining.

It also means promoting opportunities for creative and critical thinking that are both empowering and supportive.

Recommendations

ALA is calling for:

- effective partnerships and funding for nationwide adult learning projects that raise awareness of climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning
- governments and organisations to use adult and community education as a process to engage with the sustainable development goals (SDGs).
- maintaining international obligations on climate action and sustainable development including Australian commitments to the UNESCO [CONFINTEA VII](#) Marrakech Framework for Action and United Nations [Transforming Education Statement](#) to promote the role of adult learning and community education.

CONCLUSION

The Australian Government must formally recognise and invest in ACE and lifelong learning. ACE is underfunded and yet the federal government continues to rely on the goodwill of the not for profit sector to contribute to ongoing consultations, policy discussions, solution development and research without acknowledgement, funding or resources and yet out-sources millions of taxpayer funds to the profit sector¹.

ACE is place based and community driven. For decades ACE has been overlooked with ALA calling on the Australian Government to realise the potential of ACE and how it can contribute to better outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

We are at a critical crossroad. Our adult learning system is inequitable and unfair. Public policy is almost exclusively focussed on TAFE and universities, and on skilling the labour force. Australians most in need are deprived of opportunities to re-engage in education, entrenching disadvantage and making them vulnerable to unemployment and social isolation.

ALA is committed to achieving effective learning outcomes for all Australians and would welcome the opportunity to further collaborate with government and other sectors to ensure all adults, especially disadvantaged adult learners and marginalised groups, gain access to better social and economic prospects.

ACE is an investment in the future. If we are to truly 'leave no one behind' and ensure opportunities are both inclusive and equitable for all ages and stages of life then the 2023-24 Federal budget must have a strong focus on lifelong learning to improve our level of employment, education and training, and enhance our social and civic life.

We look forward to your consideration of our pre-budget submission and hope to engage in more detailed discussions on our suggested measures.

With decisive leadership from the Australian Government, we can address the breakdown in access to and quality of adult education.

¹ <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/why-is-the-government-spending-billions-for-others-to-do-its-job-20230126-p5cfot.html>