

Media release

Government missing vital sector

The Jobs and Skills Australia Symposium is an important opportunity for the Albanese Government to address skills shortages and expand employment opportunities – but where is the adult and community (ACE) sector?

Adult Learning Australia has been invited to attend the symposium but has not been given a chance to speak on the program about the needs of Australians, especially those experiencing disadvantage, or the untapped potential which exists for millions of young and older people to be trained or reskilled through the ACE sector for a clean energy workforce.

CEO Jenny Macaffer said across Australia community-based adult education providers drive strong outcomes for disadvantaged people through vocational education and training, foundation skills, personal enrichment and pathway learning programs. For many adults who have faced barriers, this can provide crucial literacy and numeracy skills that enable people to find work, study and successfully participate in society and community life.

“The adult education sector assists people who are disadvantaged and marginalised to be able to return to study and work. The Government is making thousands of free TAFE places available to ensure that Australia emerges stronger from the current economic situation. But many of these people need help to be able to succeed in these courses – and even to start them.”

Ms Macaffer said the Australian Government’s *Working Future: White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities*, released last week, acknowledged the need to develop “a culture of lifelong learning” with investment in strong foundation skills, including interpersonal and problem-solving skills, to be able to “adapt to the changing needs of our economy”.

However, specific policies and the role ACE can play were absent.

“This is an opportunity to advance Australia’s national social and economic goals through programs that target educational disadvantage. However, these Australians need help in getting the foundation skills they need first – they need to be able to read and write and use technology,” she said. The ACE sector, she said, is well-positioned to provide this education and training.

Ms Macaffer said if the Government wants to engage people in its work to build a strong, inclusive, effective workforce, it needs to engage with the thousands of people talking to them every day in adult and community education settings. It is time there was a renewed Ministerial Declaration on Adult Community Education. The last one was in 2008.”

“ACE workers and volunteers are doing everything they can with the most minimal of resources to break down the barriers for people to be able to learn skills, undertake training and enter the workforce.

“There needs to be a genuine shift in government thinking about valuing the ACE sector, its contribution and input in national policy making,” she said.



ENDS

About Adult Learning Australia

Adult Learning Australia, operating for 60+ years, is the national peak body for the non-profit adult and community education (ACE) sector. Its membership encompasses both organisations and individuals from every state and territory, representing the sector's diversity.

Media contact

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

Release date

4 October 2023