



Media release

Improving Health Literacy and Education Access for All Australians: Insights from the COVID-19 Response Inquiry Report

The Commonwealth Government's *COVID-19 Response Inquiry [report](#)* was recently released, highlighting the need for all Australian adults to have adequate health and digital literacy skills. These skills are essential for understanding and acting on government information, particularly during emergencies and rapidly changing situations.

Ms. Macaffer of Adult Learning Australia (ALA), the national body for adult and community education, highlighted the importance of supporting Australians in developing language, literacy, numeracy, and digital (LLND) skills for healthier, independent, and engaged lives.

"The pandemic showed us how essential it is for everyone to access information that supports safety, health, and compliance with restrictions," Ms. Macaffer said. "In health emergencies, it's critical that all citizens can easily access and understand government resources to maintain their safety and social connections."

ALA participated in one of the consultations undertaken by the Inquiry Committee. The Inquiry report also notes the importance of initiatives to address misinformation and disinformation through "literacy building, proactive communications, and regulatory approaches. These are important longer-term initiatives to build societal resilience".

Ms Macaffer said that the Government needs to act prior to any future crises to ensure that as many adults as possible can access the literacy and education they need to be able to access and understand information about health and wellbeing. Funding should be allocated to adult and community education providers to support communities at risk with accessible health literacy and learning programs.

"Older people, people with disabilities, and individuals from refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds must have the ability to access and understand health information, particularly when it is provided in digital formats."

LLND skills are essential not only for building careers and securing employment but also for navigating life's challenges. They empower Australians to make informed choices, participate fully in democracy, understand health information, and engage meaningfully in all aspects of society.

ENDS

About Adult Learning Australia

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

Visit www.ala.asn.au or call 03 9689 8623 for more information. Release date 31 /10/24