



WOMEN IN ADULT &
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION



Media Release

Date: 9 March 2023

Coalition of leaders call for equitable access to quality adult education and training

A group of organisations committed to advancing equitable access to quality adult education is urging Australian Governments to transform education and training systems to ensure that all individuals, communities, and businesses can participate equally and achieve the outcomes necessary to enjoy a sustainable emerging future.

At a forum on the 15th of February the Australian Coalition for Education and Development, specifically, Adult Learning Australia (ALA), Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE) and the EU Centre of Excellence at RMIT University released a statement which advocates that Australia meet its international commitments to quality education and lifelong learning by:

- Enacting a national Lifelong Learning Policy
- Supporting a sustainable and equitable adult and vocational education system
- Adopting a national education strategy by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The forum heard from leading policy makers and academics on adult education and training including:

- An address by Minister for Skills and Training, the Hon. Brendan O'Connor
- CEO of the Victorian Skills Authority, Craig Robertson
- TAFE Directors Australia CEO Jenny Dodd
- Executive Director of the Literacy for Life Foundation Professor Jack Beetson
- Elaine Butler, WAVE Ambassador and Co-Author *Fair Go for All: Equity Frameworks and Landmark Documents in Australian Vocational Education and Training (NCVER 2023)*.

Jenny Macaffer, Chief Executive Officer Adult Learning Australia, can be quoted:

“Current government policies are no longer adequate to support the transformation of our societies in the face of global challenges and changes. Access and equity to

lifelong learning are the keys to ensuring that no-one is left behind. National education and skills must clearly outline economic and social goals; integrate efficiency and equity; and set out roles and responsibilities for community, business, and all levels of government. It must emphasize the life skills required and the inter-connected pathways between learning opportunities.”

Kit McMahon, National Co-Convenor of WAVE can be quoted:

“If we want to ensure that all Australians have access to quality education that delivers pathways to meaningful work, gender equity, inclusiveness, and diversity has to be the foundation of our skills and training system, its policy and design. As a nation, we need to adopt policies and practices that ensure that our learning environments are safe and equitable for all students, learners, communities and industry.”

Jose Roberto Guevara, Associate Professor of International Development RMIT University, can be quoted:

“We need the Australian Government to renew its commitment to the Ministerial Declaration on Adult and Community Education. Australia must also take concrete steps to meet its international commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 4 ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. And more recently, its commitment to the Marrakesh Framework for Action: Harnessing the transformational power of Adult Learning and Education (2022).”

ENDS

For further information on the Policy Forum can be found via the ALA website - [Transforming education and training in Australia: challenges and opportunities - Adult Learning Australia \(ala.asn.au\)](https://www.ala.asn.au) including recordings of the speech by Minister O’Connor and a recording of the event.

The publication Butler E & Ferrier F (2023) Fair Go for All: Equity Frameworks and Landmark Documents in Australian Vocational Education and Training can be accessed at: <https://www.voced.edu.au/vet-knowledge-bank-landmark-documents-equity-access-historical-overview>

The statement of the policy forum is Attachment A to this media release.

About ALA

Adult Learning Australia (ALA) is the national voice and the largest national peak body for adult learning and community education (ACE). ALA is a not-for-profit entity that has been

in operation for more than 63 years, with both organisational and individual members in all states and territories who reflect the diversity of adult and community education.

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About WAVE

Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE) is a national network of women involved in Vocational Education and Training (VET) and adult education. WAVE provides research, policy advice and advocacy to Australian and State/ Territory Governments on gender equity in skills and adult education policy and provides input into VET and adult education internationally

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About ACED

The Australian Coalition for Education and Development (ACED) was established in 2008 and brings together 15 non-government organisations in Australia working on education in global development with a particular focus on Education for All.

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About EUCE

The European Union Centre of Excellence (EUCE) is a source of expertise regarding European Union-Australia partnerships and opportunities for collaboration, providing a focal point for teaching, research and outreach activities with the European Union (EU), Australia and the Asia Pacific region. The EU Centre of Excellence is supported by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

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Attachment A

Transforming Education and Training in Australia: Challenges and Opportunities

Policy Forum Statement

Release date: 9 March 2023

Introduction

We, the members of the Australian Coalition for Education and Development, specifically, Adult Learning Australia (ALA), Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE) and the EU Centre of Excellence at RMIT University, organised a Policy Forum entitled: Transforming Education and Training Systems in Australia: Challenges and Opportunities on 15 February 2023 at RMIT University, wish to call the attention of our policymakers, our colleagues in the field of education and lifelong learning to the following statement and calls for action.

Statement

'We believe that all Australians should have access to quality adult education and training when and where they need it. The Australian government is urged to take up the challenge of transforming education and training systems to ensure that all individuals, communities, and businesses can participate equally and achieve the outcomes necessary to enjoy a sustainable emerging future. Current government policies are no longer adequate to support the transformation of our societies in the face of global challenges and changes. Access and equity to lifelong learning are the keys to ensuring that no one is left behind.'

We advocate for the following actions:

Enact a National Lifelong Learning Policy

1. Lifelong learning must be formalised by the Australian Government as a coherent overarching framework that embraces all education and training sectors in Australia, to enhance integration and articulation of the various education and training sectors and to provide flexible affordable and accessible learning pathways for all Australians.
2. A National Lifelong Learning Policy be enacted that highlights the need for all Australians to learn and continue learning throughout life to face the challenges of the twenty-first century that recognises a life course approach and social determinants of health.

3. In keeping with the Uluru Statement of the Heart, actively ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have opportunities to define *self-determination* in *education* and to engage in rich and fulfilling learning throughout their lives.
4. The formal policy developed must clearly outline economic and social goals; integrate efficiency and equity; and sets out roles and responsibilities for the community, business, and all levels of government. It must emphasize the life skills required and the interconnected pathways between learning opportunities.

Support and sustain an equitable adult and vocational education system

5. The Australian government renews the Ministerial Declaration on Adult and Community Education, and outlines strategies to support Adult and Community Education organisations as they continue to deliver opportunities to many Australians, including disadvantaged learners.
6. The Australian government must develop, implement, and monitor nationally consistent policies and guidelines utilising an intersectional gender equity approach that embeds equity, inclusiveness, and diversity in each and all sectors of education and training,
7. Adopt policies and guidelines that create a safe and more equitable adult and vocational education system that delivers for students and learners of all abilities, communities, and industries.
8. Gender disaggregated data is used to plan for and forecast labour and skills needs and, measure the effectiveness of the student's journey and outcomes to address the inequitable nature of the vocational and adult education system and workforce.
9. The Australian government must commit to developing and resourcing a national adult literacy strategy with targets and timelines.
10. Develop the capacity of skills, workforce development, language literacy and numeracy and adult education sectors and systems to be more inclusive, sustainable, productive, flexible and aligned to our community needs and emerging economic, environmental & socio-cultural challenges.

Meet our international commitments to quality education and lifelong learning

11. The Australian government take concrete steps to meet its international commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 4, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. And to actively engage UNESCO and other member states to promote and implement the Marrakesh Framework for Action, 2022.

Statement endorsed by

