



NSW Adult Literacy & Numeracy Council

The Hon. Rob Stokes MP

NSW Minister of Education
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

by email: pittwater@parliament.nsw.gov.au

12 October, 2017

Dear Minister,

I am writing on behalf of the NSW Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council. We are a membership based professional organisation of adult literacy and numeracy teachers, teacher educators, researchers and policy and program managers. I am writing to you because I was in the audience (in my role as a teacher education academic in a NSW university) at your presentation to the NSW Council of Deans of Education on 18 August, where you noted that education needed to be understood as a lifewide and lifelong endeavour. Our Council welcomes this message. I am writing to seek an opportunity to meet with you to discuss the possibility of a distinctive NSW policy that would reflect the sentiment that you expressed in your presentation.

Although it is obvious to those of us who work in the field of education that education and learning continue through the lifespan, popular discourses about education often do not extend beyond concerns about school education. For example, while there have been ongoing debates and policy initiatives nationally and in NSW around improving the literacy and numeracy levels of school children (and prospective school teachers), the same cannot not be said about adult literacy and numeracy. There is no NSW policy that explicitly acknowledges the importance of literacy and numeracy for adults' employability, participation in the community and personal growth and wellbeing. The National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults which was released at the end of 2012 has no funding directly attached to it to support provision or any other initiative at the state level.

Adult literacy and numeracy courses in NSW have historically included community based programs that met the diverse needs of adults including:

- Parents wanting to improve their literacy and numeracy to help their children in their school studies;
- People who had a disrupted education in their childhood and want a 'second chance' in gaining an education;
- People, often women, who want to prepare for further study to re-enter the workforce after many years away from work due to carer duties;
- People with a learning disability needing a supportive environment for learning;
- Workers needing work-specific literacy and numeracy training to learn to perform new job roles or new work practices
- VET students needing support to negotiate the literacy and numeracy demands of their course
- People in jails who are wanting to access education in order to improve their employability and social connections upon release

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults who have experienced disadvantage in their education and life and who are seeking an opportunity for education in their adult life.

Some of these needs, for some adults, are met by the Commonwealth Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program. However, many are no longer met because of the stringent eligibility requirements of the SEE program. Except for a few classes in TAFE colleges and volunteer-run classes in public libraries, the demands for community-based adult literacy and numeracy classes are not being met by any public initiative in lifelong and lifewide education. Since VET has been taken out of the Education portfolio, the difficulty of having a discussion about adult literacy and numeracy as a key dimension of a coherent educational policy has become difficult.

NSW has a proud history of public adult education provision through TAFE, community colleges, workplaces and corrective services. The NSW Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council requests a meeting with you to discuss possibilities of developing NSW's own adult literacy and numeracy education policy. This would make provision more sustainable and less contingent on Federal government agendas (or lack thereof). NSW still has a sizeable qualified and committed workforce to teach adult learners of literacy and numeracy and to improve people's lives through education.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Keiko Yasukawa

President