

SUBMISSION TO THE PRIME MINISTER

28 November 2007

What Part Does Adult Education Play in Achieving an Education Revolution for Australia?

Executive Summary

- It is vital that the Government's policy position that Australia's long term prosperity can only be guaranteed by productivity growth underpinned by sustained investment across the human capital spectrum, must now embrace the potential and current contributions of ACE in Adult Learning.
- Australia now faces a major challenge in shifting perceptions about "education" and lifelong learning and the extensive record of inadequate commitment must be addressed.
- This will impact on all the key messages from the Government's political platform. These range from Climate Change Education, to indigenous engagement, to improved public health education, all forms of literacy and optimising workforce engagement and reengagement amongst many other opportunities.
- Reasonable financial support from the existing very low base needs to be provided. This should provide a reasonable focus within DEEWR as well as enabling ALA to fulfill its potential.
- Human capital development is focused largely on "the central role of education in our country's long term future" where "learning and education at all levels" is characterised as "early childhood, school, vocational, universities and research" ACE is a key link and needs to be fully empowered to make its contribution. This will enable community members to optimize their contribution to social and human capital to Australia and so address many issues of the Government's Social Inclusion policy.
- The "education revolution" claims that "We want education to be about lifelong learning. From the cradle to the classroom, from the living room to the workplace, we need to keep investing in ourselves and therefore in our future" the focus must extend beyond formal education.
- A previous Labor Government supported the recommendations of "Come in Cinderella" Inquiry (1991). However those sound recommendations lie on the floor gathering dust with many other such reports.
- The capacity of ACE organisations to engage the is disengaged, the aging population and the under-skilled is well known it is now time to use these forms of learning to address the issues faced by the whole community on a whole of Government basis.

Background

Adult and Community Education in Australia has lacked the support to achieve anything like its potential contribution to the Australian economy. It has been referred to as a “Cinderella” sector in two Senate inquiries, which made constructive recommendations. A national study conducted by DEST ‘you can too-Adult Education in Australia’ provided firm recommendations to the then Minister Brendan Nelson through a Ministerial Round Table meeting he convened. All these documents and their recommendations continue to gather dust.

The last adult education revolution in Australia was in over 30 years ago with the ‘TAFE in Australia’ (May 1975) Kangan report recommended formally shifting adult education out of universities and CAEs to TAFE. It accepted that recurrent education was an appropriate conceptual framework for a national educational system. This effectively meant after leaving compulsory schooling, access to post-compulsory education should be guaranteed to the individual at appropriate times over the life cycle.

There has been a gradual deliberate decline of the ‘FE’ (further education) from TAFE in the three decades since and a move towards almost universal formality. This formality privileges the already 80 percent of functionally literate Australians. In 2007, that accessible or appropriate state or nationally supported recurrent education is not available for over two thirds of adult Australians, is a national issue of great concern. Now as then, ‘degrees and certificates should not be looked on as an end result’ of an educational career but rather as steps and guides towards a process of lifelong career and personality development’. As the proportion of Australians not in work edges towards and beyond one third, recurrent adult learning has to remain accessible in many other, less formal and less vocational ways if we are to remain an equitable, healthy democracy as well as a world leader in education.

Research shows that learning and wellbeing are tightly related. An education revolution can also be a revolution in wellbeing, including enhancing economic wellbeing for the one fifth of Australians living in intergenerational poverty, including four fifths Indigenous Australians.

Current Concerns

It is great concern that in the last two weeks we were advised that funding under the Flexible Learning Framework for the Community Engagement projects was to be terminated so that much of the benefit of this excellent work will now be lost. This ACE approach has proved very successful and it seems bizarre that as it is to be trialled operationally for broader application the project is terminated or at least made unavailable to those that have proved it.

To ALA this seems to be a hang over from the past Government and contrary to the philosophy of social inclusion as reflected in Minister Gillard’s words “Labor recognises that education is critical to social inclusion. The fact is that school

completion rates among low socio-economic groups in Australia are far too low. If we're going to compete with other nations we simply have to get more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to complete twelve years of schooling and go on to further education and training." Our point is that those who have already been disadvantaged can get back into the mainstream through community education in the most friendly and flexible way possible. We are concerned that current policy should fully encourage social inclusion where possible and adult learning is a key tool in this.

Whenever a study is conducted into Adult Learning enormous amounts of time have been spent on defining what it means rather than getting on with the job. This should not occur again and so ALA has provided a tangible series of actions and an indicative budget.

We note the 'Skilling Australia for the Future' Statement says that Labor will 'Invest in lifelong learning for our existing workforce to ensure they maintain and improve their job prospects ...' Adult and community Education clearly has a role in this and also in engaging those currently in the workforce through similar processes. As the statement says 'Greater investment in education, skills and training will lift productivity' Adult and Community education is probably the cheapest and most flexible way of achieving this especially for the disadvantaged yet even the small funding available to us to work beyond our budgets is being eroded.

As DEST commissioned Ben Bardon report noted "The adult and community education sector can invest in 'human capital' and work with government to 'build a highly skilled workforce'. The sector already plays its part, with over 35% of VET qualifications in rural and regional Australia being delivered through community education and training organisations." This report which again identifies the value of this sector has also been analysed but not acted upon. (Bardon Report attached)

The policy base in Australia is the MCEETYA "Ministerial Declaration on Adult and Community Education (ACE)" which is currently under review. We understand that this makes Australia the only country in the OECD without a formal Life Long Learning policy. In the past it has been repeatedly stated that Australia has a de facto policy through this declaration and its current practices. This has resulted in informal questioning of Australia's genuine commitment from representatives of other countries and from our own learning community members. A Life Long Learning policy for Australia is well overdue.

In 1995 the Australian Government, Adult Learning Australia and others attended Confitea V along with some other 60 countries. Australia was a driving force in pushing through the "Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning" in another 18 months Australia is invited to attend Confitea VI in Brazil with a relatively low level of growth, in fact in some areas negative growth. We are fortunate in that we started from a relatively strong position and the commitment of those surviving in the sector remains strong. This is evidenced by the continued growth of Adult Learners Week from some 900 events last year to 1,200 events this year. Adult learning in Australia lags behind countries such as Korea and Finland as well as most of Europe. Countries such as Brazil are building their adult learning capacity and in aspects may well be ahead already.

Clause 26 of the Declaration reads as follows.” We solemnly declare that all parties will closely follow up the implementation of this Declaration and the Agenda for the Future, clearly distinguishing their respective responsibilities and complementing and co-operating with one another. We are determined to ensure that lifelong learning will become a more significant reality in the early twenty-first century. To that end, we commit ourselves to promoting the culture of learning through the "one hour a day for learning" movement and the development of a United Nations “Week of Adult Learning.” The question is not how well we have met this, but how will this Government address take us into the future?

What is Adult Learning?

We see adult learning as central to the education revolution the Prime Minister has proposed in that it is a key tool in:

- Supporting the provision of literacy for all aspects of the Australian community including indigenous peoples and migrants. Includes
 - Reading
 - Writing
 - Numeracy
 - Digital competency
 - Financial Competency
 - Natural Resource Management skills – particularly enabling national consistency
 - Cultural understanding (including Learning Communities)
 - And others
- Re engaging older workers
- Increasing the total and workplace longevity and health of Australians.
- Building international links
- Providing an opportunity for education extension within the broader community
- Keeping adults not in the paid workforce (unemployed, not in work, retired, with a disability) informed and engaged in their lives, families and communities.

In 1975 Kangan report into TAFE in Australia (pp.83-84) defined adult education as voluntary, non-credit, non-vocational, largely part time, extending beyond the formal classroom, taking place inside and outside educational institutions as student needs dictate, with no prerequisites for access, and the flexibility to respond spontaneously to individual and community needs. While this remains a fairly accurate definition, its necessary flexibility, informality and spontaneity means that participation and outcomes in the sector will always be more difficult to measure than for school, university and TAFE.

The Kangan report acknowledged that ‘If this essential service is to be maintained at its present (1975) level, and to expand further into areas of known need, additional funding assistance will be needed’ (p.87). More than three decades later, Australian adult education as a government supported sector has gone further backwards. In 2007, only one state has such an adult sector supported by government policy and funding.

Government’s Role

The position of this paper largely reflects the Hamburg Declaration and suggests that while this should be led by DEST it is a ‘Whole of Government’ consideration. The Declaration states ‘Within Governments, adult education is not confined to Ministries

of Education: all Ministries are engaged in promoting adult learning, and inter ministerial co-operation is essential.” At the levels of State and Australian Government Ministries of Education have had communication but rarely has evidence of other portfolios ever been highlighted.

Adult Learning Australia is currently seeking to involve the Joint NRM Team (DAFF and DEW) in establishing a national NRM Adult Learning Program. The Hamburg Declaration Clause 17 states “*Environmental sustainability*. Education for environmental sustainability should be a lifelong learning process which recognizes that ecological problems exist within a socio-economic, political and cultural context. A sustainable future cannot be achieved without addressing the relationship between environmental problems and current development paradigms. Adult environmental education can play an important role in sensitizing and mobilizing communities and decision-makers towards sustained environmental action.” To date the positive response of the team and numerous other stakeholders is most encouraging.

The recent ABS study survey into Adult Literacy and Life Skills rightly included health literacies and one of our policy priorities is engaging the Department of Health with a view to promoting longevity, longer work force participation and greater community well being through adult learning. In Clause 16 the Hamburg Declaration states “Health. Health is a basic human right. Investments in education are investments in health. Lifelong learning can contribute substantially to the promotion of health and the prevention of disease. Adult education offers significant opportunities to provide relevant, equitable and sustainable access to health knowledge”.

We believe that the Government can provide support at the basic level through the development of a national life long learning policy which draws upon existing policies across various sectors and promotes the positive interaction that will lead to high value-added outcomes.

An important requirement of the policy will be to strengthen adult and community education so that the substantial learning resources in communities can be mobilised in support of the National Policy. These resources include libraries, local government, community organisations and volunteers, as well as education providers. A number of innovative learning communities already exist across Australia to provide good practice models. For example recently citizens of Mackay have expressed an interest in Adult Learning Australia supporting them in establishing a Learning City and ought ALA to support through their Council officers.

Achieving the wider benefits of learning throughout life to support economic and social development objectives will require a rich network of partnerships. In order to build a shared national vision and framework for partnership building, it is recommended that an Australia Learning Council might be established to provide national leadership. The major stakeholders would be represented, and Adult Learning Australia could undertake to administer this council. DEST would have a key role here also.

Returning to the ABS survey we have analysed the data and there is a very specific area of concern in which we believe our organisation and members working with

Governments could help redress. This is the question of literacy skills in the potential existing workforce i.e. those unemployed or not in the workforce for other reasons. We believe if these people were encouraged to commence literacy training through informal education channels this would build bridges to formal skills training and greater community participation leading to increased social inclusion. Informal education has many advantages for the adults being reengaged including flexibility, low cost and being in a user friendly environment.

The relationship of literacies to disengaged adults is clear from, Table 12 on Labour Force Status, which gives a breakdown for the 5 literacy levels for people employed, unemployed, and not in the labour force. If trend data was available it would give us a much greater insight of this relationship.

We are confident officers that exist within DEST would be able to analyse these trends to greater depth and we hope that will be undertaken. We raise these issues now as we realise the limited resources applied to informal adult education within DEST they may not pick up this particular issue which we regard as both as a challenge and an opportunity to be seized.

The same relationships hold for each type of literacy i.e. Higher proportions of people at Levels 1 and 2 exist for unemployed and not in the labour force than for employed people for each form of literacy.

The relationships are consistent, the differences, and the situation is worst for people not in the labour force. The messages in this are clear, people with the poorest literacy are most likely to be unemployed or not in the labour force, while the very poor literacy of people not in the labour force demonstrates the task to be addressed in assisting such people to get back in the labour force and hold jobs.

Some examples of these relationships

	Proportions in Levels 1 and 2		
	Employed	Unemployed	Not in the Labour Force
Prose literacy	39.5	59.8	62.7
Document literacy	38.6	60.4	66.8
Numeracy	44.5	73.0	71.5
Problem solving	64.1	84.3	84.4

These are clearly sobering figures that show the links between poor literacy and unemployment, and the barrier that poor literacy presents to people not in the labour force returning to work. Clearly a large scale strategic effort is now needed with technology and media as part of the approach.

We acknowledge the contribution of the VET sector to raising literacy standards but this is clearly not sufficient and empowering the ACE sector as greater contributors would certainly be a part of the solution for Australia.

As stated in the media release we welcome several aspects of the report particularly the recognition of the importance of informal adult learning and the recognition of health literacy. We are working with numerous stakeholders scoping the delivery of eco literacies. We have had some discussions with Treasury officers to address

financial literacies and have undertaken very positive work in the area of digital literacies. Regrettably our resource base is insufficient to progress these matters with the priority they deserve.

It is of some concern that DEST does not have a specific section to support Adult Learning in Australia despite the fact that two key officers involved in the area from the Adult Literacy Section have shown great commitment. It is suggested that with the upcoming Confintea meeting that additional resources will be needed. Further if the Government wishes to seize the opportunity of growing adult learning in Australia then those needs will have to be met on an ongoing sustainable basis.

In addition officers in other Departments with the role of addressing adult education responsibilities should be identified.

Adult Learning Australia's (ALA) Role

Education, training and learning are central issues in public policy. As the peak body representing adult learning in Australia, ALA strives to make a well-researched contribution to the debates on these issues and be at the forefront of innovative learning methodologies. ALA is the best placed sector body to help Government to bring together a cohesive national policy and a suite of effective national projects to enable adult learning in Australia to achieve its potential.

ALA believes a significant funding boost for this subject matter would lead to an excellent return to the Australian Community. We have attached an indicative budget to address all the items in the submission. On each of these items we have suggested range of funding, the lower figure as a minimum to address the issue the upper figure to achieve optimum outcomes. In all cases we believe a whole of Government partnership with ALA and possibly other organisations such as ALGA and the industry representative groups will provide the ideal estimates of required investments and so this draft budget is indicative only. Some of the costs could be accessed from existing sources such as the Natural Heritage Trust others will require specific new funding. **(See Attachment)**

ALA's has managed the pilot Community Engagement Project for the Flexible Learning Australia Framework of the national Vocational Education and Training system during 2005-2007. An independent Strategic Review of the project concluded that scaling up the demonstration project is worthy of consideration by decision-makers.

The project stated aims included the embedding or integrating e-learning in existing community based and regional development initiatives and to target the e-learning to increase participation of targeted disadvantaged groups in (formal) education. This project is highly relevant to today's needs particularly in preparing young Australians

to build their ICT skills we also need to build the skills of their parents to realise their potential by entering the workforce, enhancing their work skills and/or staying engaged with the workforce for longer. It is essential that we learn soon if the continuation of this work is to be funded.

Failure to fund this will not only cause the benefits of the work to be lost, the future potential not to be realised but also in the loss of critical from ALA and possibly from the sector completely.

The Association brings together a diverse group of individuals and organisations working in adult and community education throughout Australia. It represents the interests of these practitioners at the national level.

ALA has a particular interest in the development of a culture of lifelong learning throughout the community backed up by a very wide range of accessible educational facilities to cater for diverse needs.

We have had experience in managing and coordinating national and state projects. ALA has been the national coordinator of **Adult Learners' Week** (ALW) for twelve years. ALW is an international and national celebration of learning, whose focus in 2007 was Literacies New and Existing.

ALA publishes both an academic journal of high standing and a sector news magazine which is well received.

ALA's **research** concentrates on issues concerning the disengaged learner and on building a learning society. A major project undertaken was the building of a Learning Communities website, which will give a national overview of developments in this area and lend support to many emerging communities around the country. We are also exploring ways in which to improve training outcomes for the older unemployed.

- ALA provides targeted research into Adult Learning through its network of research fellows, its well recognised journal "....." its website and its annual conference.
- ALA has been developing and promoting the **learning circle methodology** in Australia. The high standard of our learning circle programs has been acknowledged by receiving the Australian Award for Excellence in Educational Publishing. The following programs demonstrate ALA's development of effective and pertinent materials for the Australian community:
- ALA is working to assist in the extension of the internationally acclaimed Men's Sheds project with the University of Ballarat and others as a tool in which adult learning can be employed to address the social exclusion issues that many men face in today's society.

Community men's sheds participants are disproportionately from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The potential of such sheds to reach a relatively

elusive target group with lifelong learning combined with support for wellbeing and health are plain. The same socioeconomic group is conspicuously absent from existing adult and community education and neighbourhood house settings, as men are in general. Sheds have grown exponentially and unevenly as a grassroots activity, with men acting with initiative to improve their own health and well being through group activity and social learning.

ALA proposes the federal government supporting development of eight pilot sheds in each state and four in each territory with \$3 million administered through the Australian Men's Shed Association, initially targeted at communities with high proportions of men not in paid work. A research evaluation of their impact would cost an additional \$110,000.

- ALA has worked closely with the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, Wetland Care Australia, and the Department of the Environment, Sport and Territories through its Environmental Education and Information Grants Program to produce learning circle material on blue-green algae, dryland salinity and coastal management. It assisted in the development of a community guide based on the learning circle methodology entitled *Living with Wetlands*.
- *Learning and Living in the Third Age*: This extensive program was pivotal in engaging older Australians in current issues.
- *Federation Community Projects Program*: This program was funded by the then Department of Communications Information Technology and the Arts to develop learning circle kits for older Australians in two large electorates in NSW – Sydney and Cook. ALA developed eight discussion modules, which encouraged learning circle participants to explore our history, and the economic, social and cultural changes, which have occurred in the Australian community over the last 100 years.
- *Bodies Matter*: A three-part pilot program supported by video, web page, freecall line, and pamphlets were aimed at women over 60. The kit focuses on a sensitive women's health issue and aims to encourage older age groups to take charge of their health needs, and encourage their peers and family to participate in this much needed program.
- In 1998, as part of the Commonwealth Government's 'Discovering Democracy' program the Department of Employment, Science and Training (DEST) funded ALA to develop two learning circle kits, *The Governance of Australia* and *The Three Spheres of Government in Australia*. These kits are now being distributed nationally. ALA regularly holds workshops for teachers on others to introduce them to the kit.

Adult Learning Australia remains a strong organisation despite ever tightening resources and has shown considerable initiative. It has been in existence some 47 years and to some extent has taken on Board responsibilities that in some other

countries are met by Government. For most of its existence it has promoted adult learning and encouraged research as its main priorities with limited support to its members. In recent times that emphasis is changing to increase support to members and provide encouragement in directing them towards engagement in courses that build 'bridges' to work force training. This change of focus has resulted in increased interest from new members who include organisations and other Associations; Adult Learning Australia is starting to grow again at an encouraging rate.

Funding provided to Adult Learning Australia to deliver Adult Learners Week and is \$..... whereas our equivalent body in New Zealand receives some \$..... funding in other countries such as England and Scandinavia is at a higher level again whereas some countries such as the USA provide little support. The level of progress in the various countries largely reflects this commitment. A critical issue in Australia is varying approaches between the States. Until Adult Learning Australia was a key mechanism in addressing this and providing good networking and a basis for consistent dialogue. Funding constraints were a key element in abandoning this model for a single national model. With the appointment of the new CEO the gravity of the issues arising was observed and considerable effort is being put into building a new network for the States and national adult learning providers and stakeholders. ALA also receives Government support for activities relating to building bridges to VET studies this allows us to provide some good support in this area however the potential benefits could be much greater if these funding levels were returned to those of some 6 years ago in real terms this may mean a retrospective indexing plus a one off funding grant to redress the current resource shortages.

The question arises how this can be sustained without a current minimal resources base. The answer may lie in seeking support from members and the private sector but this will take some years to achieve and in the meantime opportunities continue to be lost. An increased level of support is suggested to meet these goals.

Current initiatives of Adult Learning Australia are listed in Appendix A.

Adult Learning Australia's International Links are described in Appendix B.

The Other Stakeholders

The potential of adult learning in engaging 'other stakeholders' is far from being realised. The ALA board has made a move to engage this broader spectrum of community as it becomes possible. The primary constraint to a rapid rate of achievement is inadequate resourcing and poor communication to the stake holders of the returns achievable through greater participation.

The work Adult Learning can achieve in easing carbon footprint and other aspects of the Governments environmental policy or in health policy and in the work that can be done in indigenous communities etc. needs to be evaluated and implemented. ALA

and a new presence in the Australian Government can enable this considerable potential to be realized.

The scope of this submission does not allow for full consideration of any of these opportunities they are briefly identified to inform you of the great opportunities that have not yet been taken up.

1. State Governments

- a. There is little consistency between State government approaches. Victoria is well recognised as the leading State in Adult Education, whereas NSW appears to be reducing its commitment in this area. Queensland has taken positive steps in recent times but is starting from a low base. SA, WA and Tas appear to have a core commitment but are all considered under resourced. The ACT appears to have good commitment but is fragmented.
- b. ALA can work with DEEWR and other AG Departments to consolidate this picture and identify opportunities to strengthen consistency which is tailored for regional needs. This is a major task and would require dedicated resources both in the AG, State Governments and ALA.
- c. Adult Learning currently sits under the literacy heading within DEEWR and there is at most one only dedicated officer to adult learning.

2. Local Government

- a. Local Government is one of the most effective but also the most under recognised contributors to adult learning. For example the Hume Global Learning Centre is a brilliant Adult Learning facility which evolved from the basic Library precinct in the area.
- b. All Libraries, museums and art galleries are adult learning facilities which provide the basis of infrastructure for greater development opportunities. This is well evidenced by excellent work at the Melbourne Museum
- c. A central issue here is that many if not most local Government bodies do not realise their significance in adult learning provision. Marrickville Council in Sydney is a body that does realise its role and ALA is working with that Council to provide to which all other Sydney councils will be invited to help local Government realise that potential.
- d. This is a major task with excellent cost benefit potential which requires resourcing.

3. Indigenous

- a. ALA believes there is a good opportunity for co-ordination of Indigenous adult learning through its offices.

- b. ALA would be pleased to support an indigenous adult learning co-ordinator in its offices, if such a position could be funded by either and or both DEEWR and Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.
- c. From discussions with Indigenous interests it appears likely that there would a high level of support for this concept from indigenous communities as it would support the tailored development of training specific to their needs.
- d. ALA is convening a meeting between two RTO's a leading Indigenous community and themselves to scope the draft proposal. The participation of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and DEEWR will be sought.

4. Natural Resource Management

- a. Natural resource Management is challenged by inconsistent understanding of terminology and interpretation of approaches.
- b. The Natural Heritage Trust is clearly successful but monitoring, capacity building and community communication remain as challenges.
- c. ALA has developed in principle partnerships with key players and drafted a project concept along the following lines:

“Adult Learning Australia will undertake the co-ordination and management of natural resource management education strategy which targets the education and skills development needs of Australia’s Catchment Management Authorities.

This will be done by the development and implementation of a pilot delivery project to 3 CMA’s (2 in Qld and 1 in Victoria), for the period June 2008 to December 09.

This will culminate in a national workshop which will develop holistic and sustainable curricula which can be adapted to meet the needs of all CMA’s across Australia.

This process will assure a level of consistency that will enable optimum efficiencies in delivery and a sound basis for consistent reporting.”

- d. Clearly the involvement of the Dept. Agriculture Forests and Fisheries and the Dept .of Environment Heritage and the Arts is required but other Departments may hold an active interest.

5. Business

- a. Business provides considerable adult learning training to its employees there is little appreciation of the overall value in this sector and basic research is desirable.

- b. ALA has set this area as one of its current priorities and this established a special award to recognise the excellent work that Rio Tinto was undertaking in providing Adult Learning for its indigenous employees.
- c. ALA is seeking reciprocal member arrangements with many industry and other associations to enable a co-ordination and networking of this type of training.
- d. Our CEO reports that from his experience as the CEO of three industry bodies and advisor to many more that training will usually sit as the second last item on most Board Agendas, it is recognised as important but generally not the direct expertise of the Board. ALA is willing to work with industry bodies in respect of Adult Learning activities to enable networking, updating and achievement of efficiencies.

6. The Older Community

- a. Statistics show clearly that life long learning is clearly connected to greater longevity and work force participation.
- b. Given the current skills shortage we feel this is a very strong argument for greater investment in adult learning.
- c. ALA's members have requested we link with the Department of Health and Ageing and DEEWR as well as the department of Housing and the Status of Women. This is part of our work plan subject to resource availability.

7. The Literacy sector

- a. This issue is very strongly dealt within the initial part of this submission. We see this as an absolutely critical issue which is significantly under resourced and insufficiently co-ordinated.
- b. ALA can take a significant role in networking its sector to provide a targeted literacy training boost in Australia. This would encompass all forms of literacy. Our media release on the recent ABS survey is attached.
- c. ALA would support and participate in a national meeting to address this issue.

8. Treasury and Finance

- a. Lack of Financial literacy is a major issue across Australia. This is a significant community issue as evidenced by high levels of credit debt and bankruptcy.
- b. ALA has provided a basic financial literacy tool on its website and can develop further tools if support becomes available'

9. UNESCO, ASPBAE

- a. Australia has played key roles in international education and attended COFINTEA V with ALA and the Australian Government in partnership. Recently the then Foreign Minister Alexander Downer expressed a strong commitment to international adult learning. It is of concern that this is not well reflected and it may be that our performance against the Hamburg Declaration might be brought into question. The Australian Government in recent years appears to have had a lesser commitment to multi lateral agreements and more too bilateral albeit not in adult learning.
- b. It is interesting to note that ASPBAE was established in Sydney, Australia on 30 January 1964 by a group of adult educators inspired by the idea of promoting liberal adult education in the region: close to forty (40) individuals participated in this founding meeting. From its inception and up till the 1970's, ASPBAE operated mainly as an informal clearinghouse on adult education. Its functions were devoted primarily to the dissemination of information on events and developments related to adult education and on liaising with UNESCO and other international agencies especially in relation to planned workshops and seminars in the Asia-Pacific region.
- c. In the year 2000, ASPBAE launched a broad-based set of national and sub-regional consultations on a strategic review and planning process coinciding with ASPBAE's Third General Assembly. The results of the strategic review revealed that ASPBAE had grown into a network of significant depth and reach, advancing transformative adult education and learning in the region. The members however observed that to improve ASPBAE's effectiveness and assure better impact in achieving its vision, goals and broader social objectives, ASPBAE had to play a stronger policy advocacy role. Recent studies into the effectiveness of ALA also concluded that ALA had to play a greater role in policy development.

- d. To get the issue of CONFITEA VI on track ALA has initiated discussions with DEEWR and Foreign affairs but remain that considerable work needs to be done without any identified resources. Given that UNESCO's considers this their most important meeting in the coming years ALA is hoping that the issue will be accorded higher priority and that ALA's active participation can be supported by Government

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **That a working group including ALA, DEEWR, NHT, and DHA and others as required be convened to draft an operational plan to implement adult learning initiatives.**
- **That a working group be convened between DEEWR, ALA and DFA to prepare for CONFITEA VI**
- **That urgent consideration be given to the commencement of work on a National Life Long Learning policy with a focus on social inclusion, community health and building bridges to vocational education.**
- **That consideration be given to restoring ALA's level of funding to enable ALA to optimise its contribution to adult learning in Australia.**
- **That the Treasurer give consideration to listing Adult and Community Education as an Item in the 2008/09 Budget.**
- **That a national whole of Government and education stake holder workshop be convened through the community literacy sector related including ALA and ACAL.**

A Final Word from Clause 4 of the Hamburg Declaration

The potential contribution of adult and continuing education to the creation of an informed and tolerant citizenry, economic and social development, the promotion of literacy, the alleviation of poverty and the preservation of the environment is enormous and should, therefore, be built upon.

At ALA we hope you will seize the opportunity to put adult learning in the fore front of your Education Revolution.

Indicative Draft Budget Concept Adult Learning Accelerator*

ITEM	Funding Sought \$'000
DEST Dedicated Staff -Essential	500
Restore ALA Capacity to Year 2000 levels with catch up support-Essential	800
CONFTEA VI Operational	600
Bilateral International and Asian/Pacific specific	150
Indigenous Adult Learning support	200
Men's Sheds Project Evaluation* and promotion	160
Continuation and Implementation of the Australian Community Flexible Learning Framework – Community Engagement Projects	700
Financial Literacy Development	200
Development of an Australian Life Long Learning Policy	150
Natural Resource Management Literacy Project	600
Local Government Coordination	80
Business Coordination	80
Life Long Learning and Health Research	150
General Literacy Development and response to survey ALA and DEEWR activities	1000
Coordination across Australia	200
TOTAL (NB this includes ALA and Government activities additional to those currently being undertaken)(some economies will be achieved between the various project lines but that will require detailed scrutiny and analysis)	5590**

*** This budget is additional to the amount currently supplied and tied to VET related activities and Adult Learning Week**

**** The Men's Sheds project implementation will be the subject of a separate community engagement project that ALA support and will be the subject of a separate proposal. The cost of this work will be in the area of \$3 million to \$4 million and being of such a significant requires separate consideration.**