



**Australian Government**

**Department of Education, Science and Training**



# **Adult Learning in Australia**

a consultation paper

**you  
can  
too**



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*Australia's future depends on each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society*

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century



## Message from the Minister

It is important for all of us to keep on learning. No matter what our age – young, prime of life or older – our knowledge and skills make us best able to take advantage of the opportunities that life and society offer, including for work, family and community.

People of all ages have had to learn to deal with major changes over the last twenty or more years, not least in the impact of information and communications technology, but also in structural changes in many industries. There is no sign that the pace of change will let up.

Australians and their economy have responded well to all the changes, and to the demands on new skills involved. Australia has high participation in adult learning, especially through vocational education and training and more widely through adult and community education.

Employer-provided training through on-the-job and more structured training has also been central to the re-skilling of Australians.

Nevertheless, there are areas in which we could do better. People in rural and

regional areas can have problems beyond those in the major centres. Many older people can feel anxious about returning to learning, particularly if this is in a classroom or with unfamiliar technology. Particular groups at any ages, including many Indigenous people, can have similar concerns.

This consultation paper explores some of the issues around adult learning in our society, and asks some questions about how we might draw together the strands of vigorous activity going on at personal, community, State and national levels, and about what issues and problems there may be.

The paper is the start of a consultation process about adult learning.

I invite you to offer your views and to make your contribution to ensuring that Australia has a robust learning culture that is accessible to people of all ages.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Brendan Nelson'.

BRENDAN NELSON



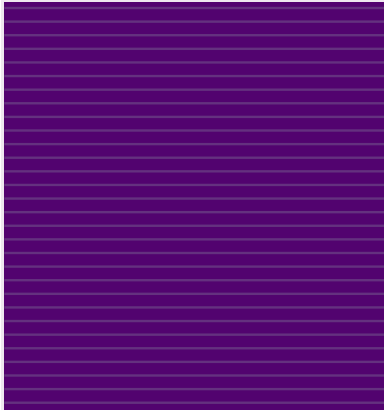
Learning in adult and community education – motor vehicle maintenance.



Adult and community education – developing computer skills for information technology, communication and the Internet.



Personal interaction helps to offset fear or anxiety. “Laminex therapy” – tea around the kitchen table – is an important friendly, informal technique.



## The value of learning

At a time when each Australian is likely to have several different occupations during his or her lifetime, learning from schooling through to mature age and beyond is vital.

The value of education and training cannot be overestimated. Across all age groups, Australians who have finished Year 12 or a vocational equivalent are around one and a half times more likely to be employed full-time than those who have not. Similarly, those who have gone on to get a vocational qualification or university degree earn more money and often have greater levels of job satisfaction than those who have not.

But for a majority of Australians, formal learning finished after 10 or 12 years of schooling. Today, more than half of all 25 to 64 year olds have not done any further study beyond school.

Formal learning need not stop with school. Learning through mid-life and beyond can provide greater security and prosperity.

People who continue to learn throughout their adult lives remain more competitive in the labour market and enjoy higher standards of living.

Learning serves personal, civic and social purposes as well as vocational ones – it enriches our culture, promotes intellectual life and helps people to achieve their potential as citizens.

There is even growing evidence to suggest that learning has positive health effects, particularly for older members of our community.

Adult learning also enables Australia to maintain its competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive world economy.

## **A changing work environment and changing expectations**

Australia's population is rapidly ageing. By 2050, one in four Australians will be aged 65 or over, compared with just over one in eight today.

With a typical retirement age of around 60, there will be a significant decrease in the proportion of people participating in the workforce. This will have an impact on government services, with greater calls for public assistance, particularly in aged care, and proportionately fewer working people contributing to the funding of these services through Australia's taxation system.

Our current levels of educational participation are high. For example, in relation to schooling and tertiary education Australia's participation level is among the highest in the world.

Similarly, our level of educational attainment is good. Today, young people growing up in Australia can expect to complete at least one post-school qualification.

But as we move into the twenty first century, our current levels of participation and attainment may not be enough.

As the population ages, Australians are likely to remain in the workforce for longer, continuing to work beyond present retiring ages.

The nature of our economy and the types of jobs we do will change too. Our industries are evolving. Fifty years ago we built our prosperity on wool, wheat and mineral commodities. However, our future growth will be forged more through innovation in information and communications technology, biotechnology and other knowledge intensive industries.

The way we work will also continue to change. We have already seen an increasing reliance on technology-based work practices. These trends are likely to continue as new industries take hold.

With such innovation comes enormous change for all Australians, but particularly for older workers, and for those in rural and regional communities where the change in key industries will be most keenly felt.

Education and training, particularly for adults, will play a pivotal role in responding to these challenges.

## What this paper is about

This paper aims to promote a discussion on adult learning in Australia.

The paper seeks the views of everyone involved in adult learning – primarily current and future learners themselves, but also businesses, policy bodies, peak organisations and providers of adult education.

The paper seeks views and recommendations on how governments, business and the wider community can work together to support adult learning and to coordinate Australia’s efforts for the benefit of all involved.

“Adult learning”, as used here, refers to learning for vocational, social, civic and personal purposes for people aged 25 and over.

Within the broader context of adult learning, the paper seeks views on two specific areas:

- on the role adult learning has in addressing the challenges presented by Australia’s ageing population; and
- on the particular challenges for adults learning in rural and regional Australia.

The paper provides some background material and identifies seven key areas for consideration as outlined below.

### **Adult learning: seven key areas for consideration**

- **Understanding the needs of adult learners**
- **Building relationships between service providers, employers, government and the community**
- **Promoting the value of adult learning**
- **Assisting mature age transitions**
- **Supporting learning in the workplace**
- **Ensuring access to opportunities**
- **Engaging communities**



## Adult learning in Australia

### How does Australia stack up?

When it comes to international comparisons, Australians can be proud of their engagement in learning throughout life.

At 6.0%, education participation rates for Australians aged 40 and over are over five times the average of other Organisation for Economic Co operation and Development (OECD) countries. The next highest ranking countries are the United Kingdom at 5.0%, Sweden at 3.3%, New Zealand at 2.9% and the United States at 2.3%.

This year, more than 500,000 people aged over 40 will participate in formal learning.

Over 335,000 people aged 25 and over will attend university, and almost a million people aged 25 and over will take part in vocational education and training (VET). Of these, 200,000 will be doing an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Beyond formal learning, there is a strong tradition in Australia of learning “on the job”. More than three-quarters of all employees take part in learning in the workplace. This enables them to keep their skills up to date, and helps them to identify and pursue new career directions.

Through the ongoing learning of their staff, businesses keep pace with new technologies and management practices, and build stronger organisations and higher profitability.

## Educational challenges confronting adult Australians

Even though Australia boasts a strong record of educational attainment, most of these achievements have come in the past two decades.

Overall, adult Australians who grew up in the 1950s and 1960s have lower levels of attainment – 40% of people aged between 45 and 54 did not complete secondary school. In their youth, work was a more accessible and attractive alternative.

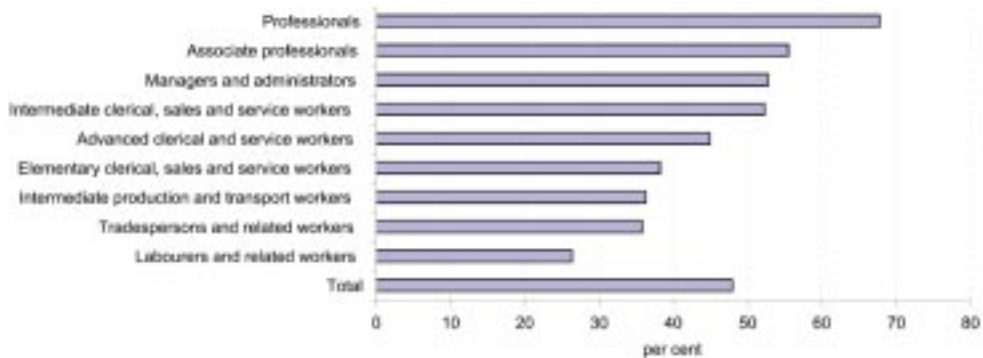
Research shows that many Australians aged over 45 do not have sound foundation skills for the modern world. For example, only half of all Australians over 45 have literacy skills of a sufficient standard to at least enable them to cope with the variety of material found in daily life.

The reasons for this are varied. For many Australians, their early learning was completed in a language other than English. Others faced challenges due to location, where they could not get access to dedicated teaching resources. Others, as in many Indigenous communities, faced combinations of such challenges.

Evidence shows us that people who do not finish school are less likely to come back to learning later in life than those who do.

This contrasts strongly with people who finish school, and go on to work in skilled jobs, such as clerical, service and professional jobs, who are more likely to keep learning through life (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Proportion of employed people who are or have in the past year participated in learning**



Source: ABS Survey of Education and Training Experience, Cat. No. 6278.0, 2001

## **Educational challenges for adults in regional Australia**

The experience of adult learners living in Australia's cities varies greatly from those living in rural and regional areas.

The general trend is for students to finish Year 12 and go on to some form of post-school learning. However, a smaller proportion of rural and regional students go on to further study than capital city students. For example, only 17% of school students in rural and regional Australia are likely to go on to university, compared to 36% in capital cities.

Even with university or Technical and Further Education (TAFE) qualifications, research suggests that many young people are leaving rural and regional communities to search for what they hope or believe are better career opportunities and lifestyles in the metropolitan areas.

Many regional communities are struggling in the face of significant changes to industries. Some industries are facing increased pressure from overseas. In other parts of Australia many farmers have been hard hit by prolonged drought.

Regional communities that have been built on agriculture or mining are increasingly required to 'reinvent' themselves to maintain prosperity and retain their populations.

As a result, many regional communities are keen to build a future based on new industries, such as tourism, innovation or the environment. The path to this new future is often through the local university or TAFE.

Communities taking responsibility for change...

Nambour Innovative Community Enterprise (ICE) was set up by enterprising locals who wanted to do something about the employment crisis in their community. It builds on the community's social and intellectual capacity and existing learning enterprises to provide the resources to create a prosperous future.

The initiative has strong support from the community including Maroochy Shire Council, the University of the Sunshine Coast, the Nambour and District Chamber of Commerce, government and non-government schools, and many businesses, service clubs and community organisations.



## The difference education and training can make

Education and training has long been regarded as a path to enhanced financial security and higher standards of living.

Those with university, TAFE or other post-school qualifications are more likely to be in paid employment (Figure 2).

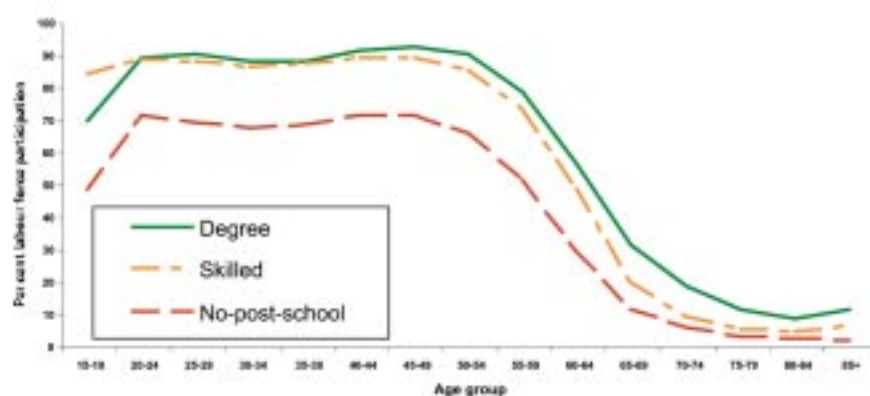
The benefits of education and training are as important to the whole Australian community as they are to individuals. A person who has a university degree is likely to earn around \$35,000 in his or her first year of work and face a risk of unemployment a third that of someone who has not completed Year 12.

Learning is vital on many levels – it enables individuals to develop new skills to remain competitive in the labour market, maintaining a supply of skilled workers to meet the demands of growing industries.

Learning allows existing employees to keep pace with new technologies and management practices, resulting in increased productivity, stronger business potential and ultimately higher profitability.

And learning lifts our economic performance. Over the past 20 years, Australia's investment in education and training has been the third greatest contributor to our economic growth (OECD Education at a Glance, 2002). The OECD estimates that each additional year of education across a country's population lifts gross domestic product (GDP) in the long term by between 4% and 7%.

**Figure 2: Labour force participation by level of education and age**



Source: Derived from ABS survey data on education, training and information technology 2001

## Engaging adult Australians in ongoing learning

Adult learners are all different. They have different levels of education, different attitudes towards learning, different occupations and different aspirations.

As the workforce ages and businesses grow to rely more heavily on the skills of mature aged workers, we need to find ways to engage more adults in learning to improve their existing skills and take on new ones.

Our challenge is to find ways to eliminate the hurdles confronting mature aged people – particularly those aged 45 years and over – in returning to learning.

A recent study completed for the Australian Government by the University of New England found that the principal hurdle to further education for Australians aged over 45 and disadvantaged in the workforce is feelings of anxiety. The report can be found on the Internet at [www.dest.gov.au/train/train\\_pub.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/train/train_pub.htm).

The report suggests that many of these adults do not think of themselves as very good learners and generally lack confidence in their own abilities. Some fear or dislike learning as a result of their negative experiences at school, while others avoid learning in the belief that it would be of no benefit to them.

The study found that making the learning process an ‘informal and social experience’ rather than one based on formal assessment assists many people to overcome their anxiety. Providing a safe, non-threatening environment where the teacher and the learner negotiate the learning process is more likely to help mature aged learners stay with a course.

By negotiating learning, the learner’s individual needs, abilities and attitudes can be taken into account. Mature aged learners value their involvement in the learning process, as well as the encouragement and feedback they receive from others.

This approach to learning has been particularly successful in Australia’s adult and community education (ACE) sector.

It has also been successful in the VET sector, where the number of adult learners has grown 50% in the last ten years.

*It doesn't feel like a class as such  
and you always know someone.*

Learner, ACE Course

## Government support for adult learning

Governments play an important role in providing education and training opportunities for adult learners.

Australian Government programmes and initiatives like the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) and the Reading Writing Hotline have had enormous success in improving basic skills for disadvantaged members of the community.

The Basic IT Skills for Older Workers Programme (BITES) provides nationally recognised basic IT skills for low income earners aged 45 or over with limited or non-existent IT skills, with a view to increasing their competitiveness in the job market.

The New Apprenticeship Access Programme provides pre-vocational training and support to unemployed people of all ages who need help to be able to undertake a New Apprenticeship or other vocational pathway.

State and Territory Governments play an essential role in supporting adult learning by providing funding for the TAFE system, adult and community education, and migrant education.

Both levels of government also provide support for Australia's vocational education and training system, which for many adults, is the preferred choice for building their skills. TAFE and private providers are seen by many as more accessible, practical and vocationally oriented than university.

Local governments also play an important role, for example through funding, cooperative programmes and local learning centres.



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information service  
myfuture.edu.au

**myfuture.edu.au is a world standard interactive online career exploration service for Australians of all ages who wish to explore their career options. The service is a joint initiative of the Australian and State and Territory governments. It is freely available on the internet at [www.myfuture.edu.au](http://www.myfuture.edu.au)**

## Community support for adult learning

Australia has a highly successful adult and community education (ACE) sector. At present, more than one million adult Australians are undertaking some form of study in the sector.

The ACE sector is defined by its community basis. Around 40% of ACE students learn with 1200 providers in the public VET system. Programmes are also run by schools, universities, community groups and private providers. They are generally run independently of the major programmes of the providers. They are conducted more informally, often in a community environment. Over recent years, there has been increasing collaboration between the sectors to provide a more diverse range of learning experiences.

Within VET, vocational courses account for about 45% of all ACE courses. Enrolments are nearly proportionate to metropolitan and non-metropolitan populations. Almost 63% of VET ACE enrolments are in subjects that are not assessed.

ACE provides different kinds of learning opportunities, including: courses to facilitate the development of foundation skills, such as adult literacy and numeracy skills; vocationally oriented courses, such as computer training or office skills; public education courses, such as parenting skills or civics education; and general interest courses, such as woodwork or languages.

**In July 2002, all State and Territory and Australian Government Ministers with a responsibility for education and training endorsed a new *Ministerial Declaration on Adult Community Education*, which emphasises the importance of learning in building community capacity and the importance of ACE as a pathway to further education and training for 'second chance' learners.**

**The Declaration identifies four goals to guide the future development of adult learning in Australia. These are:**

- 1. Expand and sustain innovative community based learning models.**
- 2. Raise awareness and understanding of the role and importance of adult community education.**
- 3. Improve the quality of adult community education learning experiences and outcomes.**
- 4. Extend participation in community-based learning.**

**The goals demonstrate the Ministers' commitment to the future development of adult community education in Australia and firmly place adult community education as a significant contributor within the continuum of education and training provision in Australia.**

**A copy of the Ministerial Declaration on Adult Community Education can be found at [http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mctyapdf/ace\\_declaration.pdf](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mctyapdf/ace_declaration.pdf).**

## Business support for adult learning

Businesses understand the need for ongoing learning.

In 2002, 81% of Australian employers provided opportunities for their adult employees to develop, maintain and improve their work-related skills at a cost of more than \$4 billion.

Employers also provide practical support for their employees in ways such as time to attend courses, paying a contribution towards fees and other costs, and incentives such as bonuses or promotions for those who update their skills.

Employers provide both course-based and on-the-job training. In 2002, around a quarter of employers provided structured training which is nationally recognised, while others provided unstructured training. 12.9% of employers employed apprentices or trainees.

The Australian Government assists business to train employees by providing incentives to those who open up training related opportunities, by making direct expenditure on work-related training tax deductible and by supporting specific workplace skills and training initiatives. A useful entry point on the Internet for assistance available to business is <http://www.business.gov.au>.

*Training is good for employees,  
it pays dividends for the business  
and people work more  
efficiently and effectively.  
It is really a win-win situation.*

Rick Smith, Site Manager Auspine



## A coordinated approach to adult learning

Australia is well positioned to build on the strength of its record in adult learning.

Our system has grown organically over time. We need to ensure that the system for delivering services to adult learners is as efficient and as focused as it can be.

It is important to ensure good integration of services to learners, their employers, providers and the community, especially for those in rural and regional Australia.

Enhanced integration would allow people to have greater awareness of the learning services available and assist employers to find the right training from providers who can meet their needs.

A more coordinated approach to adult learning could help us to improve foundation skills and generic vocational skills.

It could also ensure better opportunities for people to engage in learning in the workplace, encourage higher levels of community participation and social engagement, and help people to make more informed decisions about learning, work and retirement.

## Key Action Areas

There are seven key areas proposed to focus discussion. These are addressed in more detail on the following pages.

- Understanding the needs of adult learners
- Building relationships between service providers, employers, government and the community
- Promoting the value of adult learning
- Assisting mature age transitions
- Supporting learning in the workplace
- Ensuring access to opportunities
- Engaging communities

## 1. UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF ADULT LEARNERS

There is already a great deal of agreement about what constitutes good practice in the education and training of adults.

We know, for example, that adults come to learning with a variety of experiences, attitudes and expectations, and that providers need to account for these in designing effective programmes.

Adults prefer to participate voluntarily in the learning experience and learn best if they have a degree of control over their learning environment. Where workplace learning and other forms of vocational education are concerned, they generally want to be able to apply the skills that they are learning to their jobs immediately so they can see a quick and practical 'return on investment'.

Given these characteristics, it is important for providers to create learning environments that focus on the personal goals of the adult learner, build on previous life experiences, and promote positive self-esteem and self-worth.

There is a need to ensure that good practice in teaching adult learners is widely shared across the sector, and that providers are always striving to ensure the best outcomes for individual learners.

### SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- **What do we know about adult learners?**
- **What are the most effective ways to communicate with adults to engage them in the learning process?**
- **Are there better ways of sharing knowledge about the learning needs of adults and the most effective ways of meeting those needs?**
- **How can providers ensure they are creating a positive learning environment?**

## **2. BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SERVICE PROVIDERS, EMPLOYERS, GOVERNMENT AND THE COMMUNITY**

Perhaps one of the best ways to deliver better outcomes for adult learners is to strengthen the networks between providers, employers, governments and the community.

A cooperative approach would improve the visibility and availability of services on the ground, ensuring that people, including unemployed people, have ready access to the information they need to make decisions about further education.

A cooperative approach would also lead to better coordination of programme delivery, reducing duplication of effort, eliminating any gaps in provision and facilitating best practice approaches to teaching and learning.

### **SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

- **How can we create better linkages between service providers, industry and the community to assist mature aged Australians to engage in learning?**
- **What sort of role is there for local governments and community organisations?**
- **How can we build on existing networks, including Job Network, to provide better services for adult learners including unemployed people?**
- **What should be the role of the Australian Government?**
- **Are there good examples of cooperative approaches in the field of adult learning and why have they been so effective?**
- **What are some of the impediments to maintaining productive relationships and how can they be overcome?**

### 3. PROMOTING THE VALUE OF ADULT LEARNING

Many people understand the value of learning in gaining foundation skills such as literacy and numeracy, and initial vocational qualifications to gain employment. But not everyone realises the value of learning beyond initial education and training.

Ongoing participation in learning is clearly one of the best ways to ensure that people find and keep the jobs they want. Ongoing training enables them to progress through their careers and build a comfortable standard of living. It is critical in enabling companies to be innovative and stay competitive.

Promoting adult learning could potentially lead to increased participation in vocational and non-vocational forms of learning, in turn leading to positive outcomes for individuals, their employers and society. Promotional campaigns may also be used to demonstrate to employers that there are significant gains in providing workplace learning opportunities for older workers.

The Australian Government's National Strategy for an Ageing Australia states:

*For mature age workers to continue to be active in the workforce, there will need to be interplay between several sets of responsibilities: mature age workers will need to accept the challenge of keeping their skills up to date; employers will need to assist employees in these endeavours, where necessary; and employers will need to apply more*

*positive attitudes and approaches to the continued employment of mature age workers. These mutual responsibilities will be especially important for workers with low literacy levels and those with limited access to, and familiarity with, technology.*

#### SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- **What are the most effective ways to promote adult learning generally?**
- **How can we identify the people who would benefit most from participating in learning and how can we effectively target our efforts to provide for them?**
- **How can we change the attitudes of employers who do not understand the value of learning for older workers?**
- **What are some of the key messages for promoting the value of adult learning to different stakeholders?**
- **Are there particular segments of Australian society that are less likely to participate in ongoing learning and what are the best ways to help them?**

#### **4. ASSISTING MATURE AGE TRANSITIONS**

We all face a variety of transitions throughout our lives – as adults we move from school to work, university or TAFE; from university or TAFE to work; from work to unemployment; from unemployment to work; from one job to another; and from work to retirement.

People need support to make transitions throughout their lives. They need information to help them make the right decisions, they need assistance to work through problems, and they need practical and logistical support to make it all happen.

There may be ways we can improve the learning assistance available to people in the community to make important transitions in their lives. While there are already services to support some kinds of transitions, for example, to help school leavers make the transition to university or to help unemployed people make the transition to employment, other kinds of transitions may be less well supported, such as a mid-life career change or return to full-time education.

We may need to pay particular attention to ensuring people are well-informed in making decisions for transitions, including from work to retirement. As our population ages, more and more people will face decisions about retirement, and the choices available today are more varied than ever before.

People facing retirement need to think about the impact of their decisions on their financial and personal situations. To make such important decisions they need timely, relevant information and advice.

#### **SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

- **How can we better support mature aged people to make transitions from unemployment to work, from one job to another, and from work to retirement?**
- **How can we establish and maintain strong links between Job Network members and providers of adult and community education?**
- **What role is there for education and training in supporting people to make transitions?**
- **What role can education and training play in encouraging people to remain longer in the workforce?**

## 5. SUPPORTING LEARNING IN THE WORKPLACE

Employers make an enormous contribution to adult learning by identifying and providing opportunities for their employees to develop, maintain and improve their work-related skills.

They also often give their employees time for study, pay contributions towards fees and learning resources, and provide incentives such as bonuses or promotions for those who continually update their skills.

It is important to recognise and support the contribution that employers make to learning in the workplace. The Australian Government does this by assisting employers to train their employees by making direct expenditure on work-related training tax deductible, by supporting specific workplace skills and training initiatives (like the Workplace English Language and Literacy Programme), and by providing payment incentives (such as for New Apprenticeships).

The support that employers provide is not uniform, however, and there are some employers that have not yet recognised the dividends that flow from providing their staff with education and training opportunities.

It is necessary to ensure employers understand the value of on going training for their employees, particularly for the older employees who may miss out on opportunities. For unemployed people, strong linkages between Job Network members, the business sector and learning providers are very important to maximise and target learning at the local level.

It may also be possible to consider ways in which the community can support employers to provide training opportunities for workers.

### SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- **What are the best ways to support employers to provide training opportunities, particularly for older workers?**
- **How can we assist employers to provide the most appropriate learning opportunities, both to support employees' existing needs and to ensure a sustainable workforce?**
- **In what ways can employers contribute more effectively in supporting the learning needs of their staff?**

## 6. ENSURING ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES

It is one thing to encourage and motivate people to participate in learning and to provide incentives for employers to offer learning opportunities for their employees.

It is another thing to ensure that learning opportunities can be provided in ways which are flexible, efficient and tailored to the needs of the learner, and in the employment context, to his or her employer as well.

Decisions about provision in the adult learning sector are often made at the local level, based on providers' understanding of the needs of their particular community. Courses are often offered on the basis of the needs of local industries, or in collaboration with local employers – for example, in wine-making areas, courses in viticultural skills may be offered, or in areas with high levels of tourism, courses in languages or hospitality skills might be in demand.

It is important to ensure the provision of courses that are appropriate to the demands of the local community.

This is of particular importance for rural and regional communities and for Indigenous communities, where learners may live some distance from mainstream providers or the demand for courses may be insufficient to justify provision.

### SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- **How can governments and providers better understand the nature of demand for adult learning opportunities?**
- **How can we ensure adequate provision in rural and regional areas?**
- **How can we improve access to opportunities for disadvantaged groups?**
- **What sort of priority should be given to learning for personal, social and community purposes?**
- **If some groups have particular learning needs or preferences, how can we ensure those needs are met?**

## 7. ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN RURAL AND REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

In recent years there has been much interest in the potential of using learning for the greater good of communities, particularly in rural and regional Australia.

The term ‘learning community’ has been used to describe communities that work to address their learning needs through partnerships which promote learning opportunities, and that use learning as a way of promoting social cohesion, economic development and environmentally sustainable ways of life.

The learning communities model provides particular opportunities for communities in rural and regional parts of Australia, and for Indigenous communities, especially those dealing with economic, health, social or environmental problems. The model gives local people the skills and the opportunities they need to work towards a common goal, and results in stronger community relationships and stronger local economies.

Some communities in Australia have already taken steps towards recreating themselves as learning communities. Some of these are by now well established, such as Ballarat, while others are just starting to explore what the concept may mean for their region. The following website profiles learning communities in Australia and explains what learning communities are all about: <http://www.lcc.edu.au/>.

With the benefit of their experience we may be able to determine whether the learning communities model should enjoy wider promotion in our community.

### SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- **How can communities use learning to their advantage?**
- **What are the advantages and disadvantages of the learning communities model?**
- **How can we encourage community participation in learning?**
- **Who should be responsible for community learning?**
- **Would this model suit some but not other communities?**



Director of Nursing at Nazareth House, Rita Koopman, was initially apprehensive about the idea of New Apprenticeships.

The support of the local New Apprenticeships Centre allowed Rita to introduce the initiative successfully. She says, “Rather than going to college to learn the theory and then going out into the workforce to put it into practice, New Apprenticeships allow employees to learn as they go along and to ask questions as they arise”.

Established in 1940, Nazareth House is the largest residential aged-care facility in the Geraldton area of Western Australia.



“The Cottage”, part of the Eastern Suburbs Community College, is a friendly neighbourhood adult and community education centre.



## Invitation to comment

While the preceding pages have identified seven key areas for consideration, a number of other issues have been raised throughout the paper and comment is encouraged on any issue relating to adult learning. We would like to hear your views.

You can provide your comments by filling in the feedback sheet attached to the back of this paper, or you can make a submission online at [www.dest.gov.au/research/publications/nov03/you\\_can\\_too.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/research/publications/nov03/you_can_too.htm)

If you would like to make a longer submission, you can send it to:

you can too

- Adult Learning in Australia  
LC 724, GPO Box 9880  
Department of Education  
Science and Training  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Or you can email your submission to [adultlearning@dest.gov.au](mailto:adultlearning@dest.gov.au)

If you have any questions about the consultation process, please call (02) 6240 7006.

The deadline for submissions is 5 March 2004.

## Where to from here

In addition to written responses to this discussion paper from the community, we plan to hold public discussions in capital cities and major regional centres. These will take place in February and March 2004.





