

The Development and State of the Art of Adult Learning and Education (ALE)

National report of Australia

Prepared by the Department of Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations

General overview

This overview provides brief information on current issues and broad structural features in the Australian post-school education system, including information on the responsibilities of different levels of government. The remainder of the report discusses developments in adult learning and education in Australia since CONFINTEA V was held in 1997.

In line with the *Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning*, the definition of ‘adult learning’ used in this report is all education and training other than primary and secondary schooling which is undertaken by people aged 15 years and over (the age at which Australians are able to leave schooling and enter paid employment).

Australia

The Commonwealth of Australia is a federation of six states – New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia, and includes two internal territories the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. Australia also has a number of small external territories located in the region. Australia’s government is a parliamentary democracy with three levels: Australian, State/Territory and Local. The Australian Government is based on a popularly elected parliament with two chambers, the House of Representatives and the Senate.

There are over 21 million people in Australia, 67 per cent of whom are aged between 15 and 64 years of age. Of persons 15 to 64 years, 2 per cent are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders and 65 per cent live in the state and territory capital cities. Australia’s population is diverse, with almost 20 per cent of the population being born outside Australia.¹

Australia’s education system

Australia has a well developed education and training system with high participation rates and secondary school completion rates and a continuous improvement approach to ensure that the sector is responsive to changing social and economic needs. Responsibility for the policy, administration and funding of the education sectors is shared between the Australian Government and the state and territory Governments. The states and territories hold a key responsibility for the management and administration of compulsory and post-compulsory education and training, with each state and territory government having its own laws and related policies which govern such matters as the organisation of schooling, curriculum, course accreditation, student assessment and awards. In the higher education sector, universities are autonomous, self-accrediting institutions, established in most cases by state or territory legislation.

The Australian education and training system broadly comprises four major sectors:

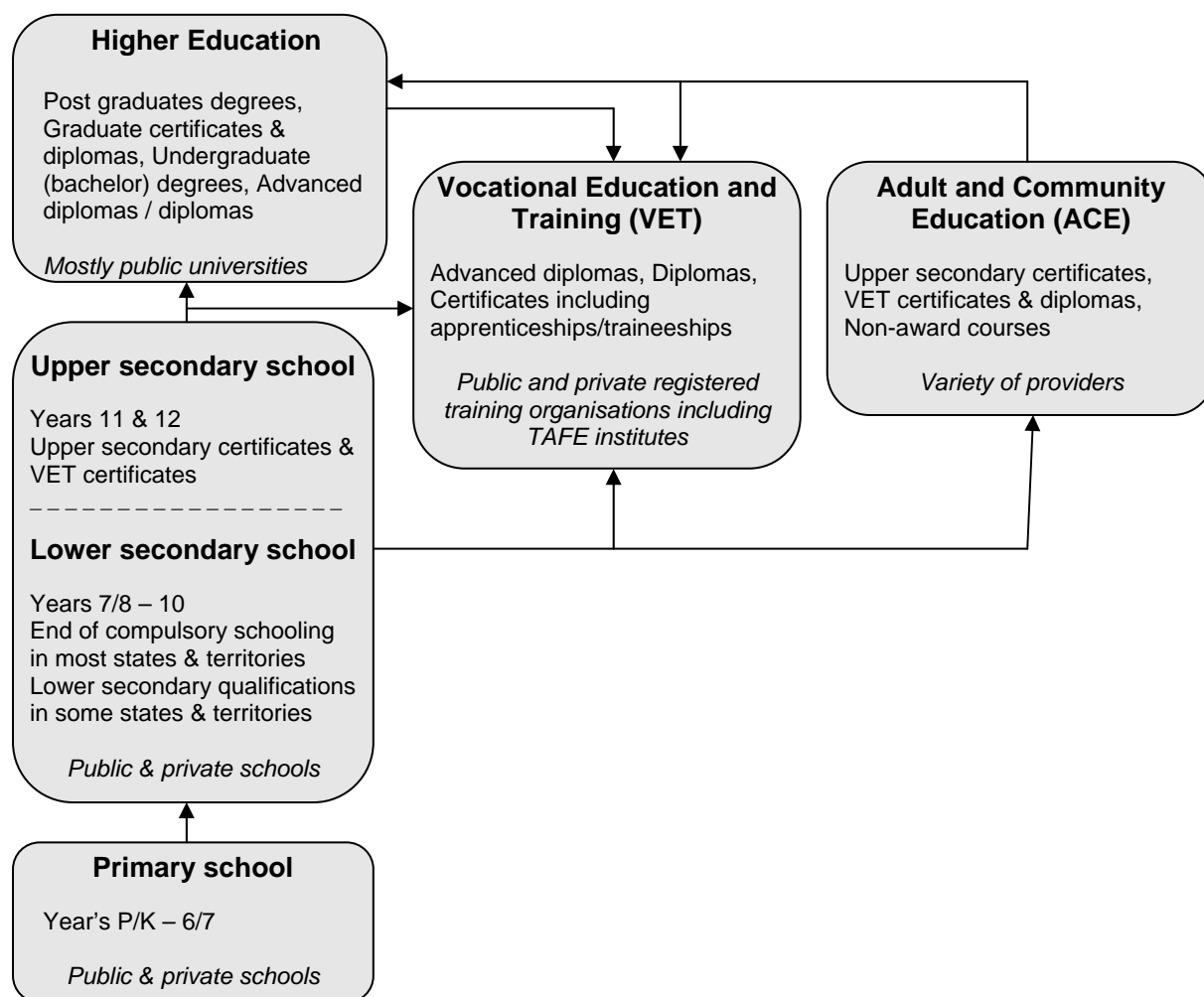
- government and non-government pre-school, primary and secondary schools;
- public and private vocational education and training providers;
- public and private higher education institutions; and
- adult and community education (ACE) providers.

The main pathways taken by students between these sectors are shown below in Figure 1. The different levels of qualifications available to Australian learners are briefly described in section 2.1.4 of this report and a more detailed description, including a mapping of the Australian

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, Census of Population and Housing, Australia. Catalogue No. 2068.0, ABS, Canberra. <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/Home/census>

qualification structure to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), is available on the Australian Bureau of Statistics' website.²

Figure 1: Overview of the Australian education system



Australians begin their education in the **schools sector**, which comprises primary and secondary schools. School education has a central role in preparing young people for the challenges of the future, and students who complete Year 12 (upper secondary school or equivalent) are more likely to undertake further education and training during their working lives. In 2007 there were 9,581 schools in Australia, of which 6,853 were government schools and 2,728 non-government schools. At this time, 70.8 per cent of all non-special schools were primary only, 16.2 per cent were secondary only and 13 per cent were combined primary/secondary schools.³

Most Australian adult learners participate in the general post-school education sector. The courses they enrol in are available to learners of all ages and prior education experience who meet the course's prerequisites. There are, however, also a number of government programs

² Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001, *Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED)*, Catalogue No. 1272.0, ABS, Canberra.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/1272.02001?OpenDocument>

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, *Schools Australia*, Catalogue No. 4221.0, ABS, Canberra.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4221.0Main+Features12007?OpenDocument> This publication also provides data on trends in the Australian schools sector since 1997.

and non-formal education courses which are tailored towards adult learners. The post-school system is administratively divided into three sectors, whose features and priorities are described in the following sections of this report.

The **higher education sector** includes 40 universities (including an Australian branch of an overseas university) and over 150 other institutions accredited to provide bachelor degrees and higher qualifications. Universities offer undergraduate diplomas, advanced diplomas and bachelor degrees and post-graduate awards including graduate certificates and diplomas, master's degrees and doctoral degrees.

The **vocational education and training (VET) sector** comprises registered training organisations (RTOs) accredited to provide nationally recognised vocational training and qualifications. The VET sector includes a variety of recognised providers including publicly funded institutes of Technical and Further Education (TAFE), as well as combined TAFE and University bodies in some States and Territories, Adult and Community Education (ACE) organisations and increasingly, individual enterprises and schools. Many of these providers also offer programmes in addition to recognised VET (such as ACE and fully commercial non-accredited training). There are currently over 4000 public and private registered VET providers across Australia.

Apprenticeships, and more recently traineeships, have historically been an important part of VET in Australia. Apprenticeships and traineeships provide a vocational education pathway combining employment and formal training. Apprenticeships last up to four years and generally involve a written contract of training (an indenture) between an employer and an apprentice. Apprentices receive structured training usually through off-the-job courses in public or private registered training organisations, and are subject to monitored practical work with their employer. The apprenticeship system was reformed in 1998 with the introduction of the New Apprenticeships system which allowed more flexibility and a wider range of options for those undertaking traineeships and apprenticeships. New Apprenticeships have since been renamed Australian Apprenticeships.

The **adult community education (ACE) sector** covers an extensive range of educational activities undertaken outside the main vocational and academic streams, including:

- vocational programs, which have an employment related focus and are designed to equip students with specific professional skills; and
- non-vocational programs, which contribute to the overall personal, cultural and social development of an individual.

Within ACE, there are two main types of vocational training programs:

- formal programs, which may lead to a qualification recognised under the AQF or other certificates; and
- informal programs, which do not result in attainment of a recognised qualification.

Vocational programs in the ACE sector are often delivered by community organisations (eg local churches and other community groups), who also provide a range of non-vocational courses. Some non-vocational education is provided by formal education institutions, but separate from their mainstream academic and vocational courses of study (eg personal interest courses conducted by universities and TAFE colleges). There are approximately 1200 not-for-profit community education and training providers around the country, 770 of which are RTOs.

Roles of the Australian and State/Territory governments

At the federal Australian Government level, the Minister for Education (The Hon Julia Gillard MP) is responsible for the Government's education and training policies, programmes and funding. The Minister is supported by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace

Relations (DEEWR), which supports the Australian Government's objectives in education and training, provides national leadership and works in partnership with the state and territory governments, industry, other agencies and the general community. The Department covers the Commonwealth's contribution to:

- early childhood education;
- school education;
- vocational education and training, including Australian Apprenticeships and training services;
- higher education;
- Indigenous Australian education; and
- international education.

The Department's responsibilities also include managing Australia's public employment system (Job Network), the Commonwealth's components of workplace relations policies and encouraging higher rates of workforce participation and productivity.

Each state and territory has a minister and department in its own parliamentary system responsible for education policy, programmes and funding. Also, in all states and territories, there are separate statutory authorities with responsibility for the assessment and certification of students at the end of Year 12, and many states and territories have separate statutory curriculum authorities.

A summary of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Australian and State/Territory governments is shown in Figure 2. The differing roles and responsibilities are discussed further in section 1 of this report.

Figure 2: Roles and responsibilities in the Australian education system

Sector	Policy	Government funding	Administration & delivery
Schools			
Government	Shared	Mainly States/Territories	States/Territories
Non-government	Shared	Mainly Commonwealth	Non-government school authorities
Vocational education and training	Shared	Mainly States/Territories	Mainly States/Territories
Higher education	Shared	Commonwealth	Autonomous universities (within agreed policy framework)

Source: DEST (2002) *Higher Education at the Crossroads: Ministerial Discussion Paper*

Trends in Australian education attainment and employment

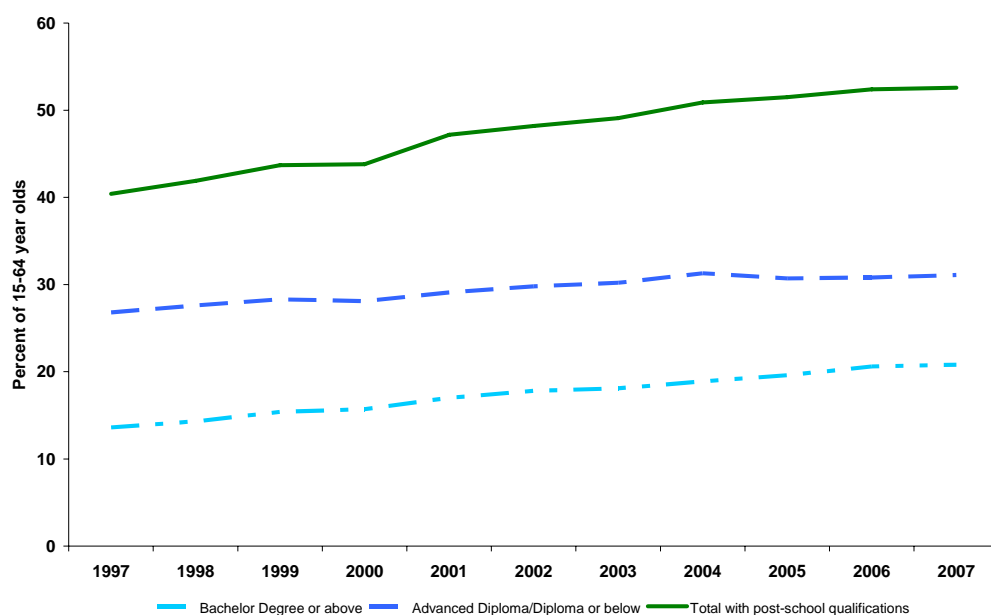
A high proportion of Australian adults have completed secondary school and hold a post-school qualification. The majority (66 per cent) of Australians aged between 15 and 64 years have completed Year 12 or equivalent, which has increased from a rate of 58.2 per cent in 1997. The proportion of Australians with a non-school qualification has increased from 40.4 per cent to 52.6 per cent between 1997 and 2007 (Figure 3). In 2007 the highest educational qualification for 21 per cent of Australians in this age range was a bachelor degree or higher, and an additional 30 per cent held a vocational qualification as their highest qualification. A slightly

higher proportion of males have a non-school qualification (55 per cent) than females (51 per cent).⁴

After increasing in the late 1990s and early 2000s, participation rates for study leading to a qualification have flattened. In May 2007, 17.4 per cent of 15 to 64 year olds were undertaking formal study or training leading to a qualification, up from 16.4 per cent in 1997.⁵

Australia's economic growth since 1997 has contributed to the development of labour and skills shortages. In January 2008 there were 10,630,000 people employed in Australia (an increase of over 2.3 million compared to January 1997), with a seasonally adjusted participation rate of 65.2 per cent and an unemployment rate of 4.1 per cent (compared to 63.5 per cent and 8.4 per cent in January 1997 respectively).⁶ Less than 19 per cent of employed persons were self-employed at the time of the 2006 Census.⁷

Figure 3: Proportion of Australians aged 15 to 64 years with a non-school qualification, 1997–2007



Source: *Education and Work Australia*, ABS Catalogue No. 6227.0 various issues (Table 7)

Changes to Australia's education system since 1997

While the structure of Australia's education system remains largely unchanged since 1997, there have been some key changes in government policies over the past decade. Changes include the reform and internationalisation of the higher education sector, introducing a nationally recognised qualifications framework in the VET sector and increased private funding of post-school education. Current priorities in the education system relevant to ALE are

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, *Education and Work, Australia*. Catalogue No. 6227.0, ABS, Canberra.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/556A439CD3D7E8A8CA257242007B3F32?OpenDocument>

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, *Education and Work, Australia*. Catalogue No. 6227.0, ABS, Canberra.

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997–2008, *Labour Force, Australia*. Catalogue No. 6202.0, ABS, Canberra.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6202.0Feb%202008?OpenDocument>

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, *Census of Population and Housing, Australia*.

discussed in section 1 of this report and the main structural and policy changes since 1997 are described in section 3.2.

The Australian Government and state and territory governments are responding to the current skills and labour shortages by adopting policies which encourage higher rates of labour force participation and upskilling existing workers. These policies include incentives and support to help people who are not in the labour force gain employment and the provision of additional training places. As well as helping meet the economy's needs for skilled workers, increased workforce participation and upskilling has strong social benefits, particularly for members of disadvantaged groups.

Research by the Centre for Economics of Education and Training forecasts a significant increase in demand for persons with higher skill levels in the coming decade, and a corresponding shortfall in the supply of people with VET qualifications at the advanced diploma and diploma levels. This shortfall can not be addressed by new entrants alone and will require the reskilling and upskilling of existing workers.⁸

In response to these challenges, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) have recently adopted targets to increase the proportion of Australians with non-school qualifications by 2020. These targets are to:

- halve the number of Australians aged 20–64 without Certificate III level qualifications by 50 per cent between 2009 and 2020; and
- double the number of higher qualification completions (diploma and advanced diploma) between 2009 and 2020.

The Australian Government and state and territory governments are also working together through COAG to close the gap which currently exists between the educational attainment of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in order to reduce Indigenous disadvantage.

Other notable changes to the Australian education system since 1997 include:

- reforms to the higher education sector with the goal of improving funding arrangements and to ensure Australia's universities maintain their high standards and remain responsive. The Australian Government has also sought to increase participation in specific fields related to skills shortages, such as science, mathematics, information communication and technology, as well as the professions of teaching and nursing;
- the increased internationalisation of the higher education sector, with Australia being one of the main destinations for international students in the OECD. In 2005, 17.3 per cent of all tertiary students in Australia were international students⁹; and
- reforms to the VET Sector to improve its responsiveness to the demands of industry and students and the formalisation of module-based courses and introduction of nationally recognised qualifications. As noted earlier, the apprenticeship program was overhauled in 1998 to address the skills shortage in trade occupations and provide more support and a wider range of options for those undertaking traineeships and apprenticeships.

In the period since 1997 the cost of post-school education in Australia has shifted from a primarily publicly funded system to one where individuals and other private entities contribute to the cost of their education. Data published by the OECD shows that between 1995 and 2004 the proportion of expenditure on tertiary education institutions from public sources in Australia declined from 64.8 per cent to 47.2 per cent.¹⁰ Students in the VET sector also contribute to

⁸ Shah, C. and Burke, G., 2006, *The future labour market and qualifications in Australia*, Centre for Economics of Education and Training, Melbourne.

⁹ OECD 2007, *Education at a Glance 2007*, OECD, Paris, p. 317.

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/4/55/39313286.pdf>

¹⁰ OECD 2007, *Education at a Glance 2007*, OECD, Paris, p. 222.

their education costs and individual contributions have increased by 36 per cent since 1997.¹¹ The Australian Government provides learners with financial assistance to meet the costs of their education through several schemes which are described in section 1.2.6 of this report.

¹¹ National Centre for Vocational Education and Research 2007, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: Financial information 2006*, Adelaide.
<http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistic/publications/1945.html>

1. Policy, Legislation and Financing

1.1 Legislative and Policy frameworks of Adult Learning and Education – this section should contain a concise description of the legislative and policy situation of ALE

1.1.1 What is the legislative and policy environment of ALE in Australia? Indicate which policies and laws related to ALE have been established since 1997

Australia's formal post-school education system has continued to develop since 1997 in order to provide improved student outcomes. The higher education and vocational education and training sectors are legislated separately and have been guided through different government policies.

Key government policies which have impacted on the provision of ALE through higher education since 1997 include:

- *Education Revolution* - this policy was introduced following the 2007 Federal Election and seeks to encourage greater participation in education as a means of increasing productivity.
- *Realising Our Potential* is a package of reforms across the university, vocational education and training and school sectors which was introduced in the Australian Government's 2006–07 Budget;
- *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* was announced on 13 May 2003 and provided additional funding for the university sector and introduced reforms which had the goal of improving universities' teaching outcomes.

In the period since 1997 the Australian higher education environment has been determined by the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* and the *Higher Education Funding Act 1988*.

Universities are established under state and territory legislation and the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* provides the legislative framework that underpins the working relationship between the Australian Government and the higher education sector.

Key legislation and agreements relating to the vocational education sector includes:

- *Skilling Australia's Workforce Act 2005*. This act provides Australian Government funding for VET during the period 2005–08. The act strengthened the funding framework and links funding for the States and Territories to a range of conditions and targets for training outcomes.
- Commonwealth and State Funding Agreements. These agreements are negotiated between the Australian Government and the state and territory governments and set out the conditions for Australian government funding for VET.

The Australian Government is implementing its *Skilling Australia for the Future* policy. The policy advocates an investment in lifelong learning to ensure Australia's workforce maintains and improves their skills in a dynamic work environment. The policy also provides incentives and training for those currently not participating in the workforce. *Skilling Australia for the Future* provides additional VET places to increase workforce participation and learning opportunities for those outside the workforce or for those in the workforce who need to upskill or reskill. Providers approved to deliver training are required to integrate literacy and numeracy skills and employability into their delivery. The policy has also established Skills Australia, a statutory body which will provide expert and independent advice in relation to Australia's workforce skills needs and workforce development needs. These priorities have been set in line with *Skilling Australia for the Future's* goal of lifting workforce participation through investment in skills.

The Australian Government also provides assistance to encourage job seekers and parents on working age income support to improve their skills by undertaking education and training. From 1 July 2009, a new employment services system will be introduced in Australia, which will provide more tailored assistance to disadvantaged job seekers and place greater emphasis on

developing the skills needed by employers to fill job vacancies. The Government has released a discussion paper to seek views on the future framework for employment services and conducted public consultations in May 2008. It has also announced a new Participation Taskforce to examine participation requirements for parents and mature age people on income support to ensure that they allow people to meet their requirements while balancing their family and community roles.

1.1.2 What are the priority goals for ALE in Australia?

As adult learning and education forms part of the general post-school education sector, it shares the sector's priority goals. As adult learning and education forms part of the general post-school education sector, it shares the sector's priority goals.

Current priorities for ALE in higher education are:

- the Government will ensure Australia's education and training system is world class and contributing to meeting the nation's long-term skills needs. To achieve this, the Education Revolution will ensure better integration between VET and higher education and collaborate with key stakeholders to encourage the delivery of high-quality education and training and facilitate improved transition to work arrangements for all students;
- the Government is implementing a range of immediate priorities for higher education, with the aims of enhancing higher education campuses and the quality of student life, improving equity of access;
- to ensure students gain access to higher education on merit and not on their ability to pay, full-fee paying undergraduate places will be phased out in public universities for domestic students from 2009; and
- the Australian Government also encourages students in higher education to study the critical disciplines of maths and science and areas such as early childhood education and nursing.

The Australian Government announced a Review of Australian Higher Education in early 2008 to examine issues relating to the role of education in Australia's long term economic development and growth and its structure. The Review will report on the future direction of the sector, its capacity to meet the needs of the Australian community and economy, and the options available for ongoing reform. Three out of the six terms of reference are directly relevant to ALE:

- *Productivity and participation* - Enhancing the role of the higher education sector in contributing to national productivity, increased participation in the labour market and responding to the needs of industry. This includes the responsiveness of the sector in altering the course mix in response to student and employer demand and an understanding of trends in the economy, demography and the labour markets served by higher education.
- *Underpinning social inclusion through access and opportunity* - Supporting and widening access to higher education, including participation by students from a wide range of backgrounds.
- *A broad tertiary education and training sector* - Establishing the place of higher education in the broader tertiary education sector, especially in building an integrated relationship with vocational education and training.

The VET system has priority goals which are outlined under the participation and productivity policy matrix agreed by the Council of Australian Governments. These are expressed as:

Aspirations:

- All working aged Australians have the opportunity to develop the skills and qualifications needed, including through a responsive training system, to enable them to be effective participants in and contributors to the modern labour market.
- Individuals are assisted to overcome barriers to education, training and employment, and are motivated to acquire and utilise new skills.
- Australian industry and businesses develop, harness and utilise the skills and abilities of the workforce.

Outcomes:

- The working age population has gaps in foundation skills levels reduced to enable effective educational, labour market and social participation
- The working age population has the depth and breadth of skills and capabilities required for the 21st century labour market
- The supply of skills provided by the national training system responds to meet changing labour market demand
- Skills are used effectively to increase labour market efficiency, productivity, innovation, and ensure increased utilisation of human capital

Targets:

- To halve the proportion of Australians aged 20-64 years without qualifications at Certificate III level and above between 2009 and 2020
- To double the number of higher qualification completions (diploma and advanced diploma) between 2009 and 2020

The Australian Government's Social Inclusion Agenda also seeks to skill potential workers, who can and want to work and are currently excluded from the labour force, to help them realise their full potential and have the opportunity to build a rewarding social and economic life.

Workforce participation is a foundation of social inclusion; it creates opportunities for financial independence and personal fulfilment. This will enhance prosperity and cohesion in communities.

1.1.3 How is ALE organised within the government? What ministry/s are in charge or involved? Is ALE centralised/decentralised? How?

The Australian Government takes a national leadership role in adult learning and education, working collaboratively with states, territories and industry through the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations and the portfolio's ministers. The states and territories are responsible for overseeing the provision of VET and ACE, and legislating universities which operate within their jurisdictions.

The Australian Government is the primary source of public funding for Australian universities and self-accrediting institutions. This funding is provided under the legislative framework of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*. State and territory governments, however, retain responsibility for the legislative acts under which most universities are established. Universities are autonomous, self-accrediting institutions that generally determine the nature and number of courses offered within broad profiles agreed with the Australian Government. They have the flexibility to move Commonwealth supported places between courses in response to student and employer demand. Responsibility for quality assurance in higher education is shared between the Australian Government, state and territory governments, institutions themselves and the Australian Universities Quality Agency.

State and territory governments have constitutional responsibility for the management and administration of vocational education and training within their jurisdictions and operate within the framework of the national strategic plan for vocational education and training to address specific priorities and needs. This includes state-level planning, regulation of training providers operating only in their jurisdiction, allocation of funds to public, private and community providers, setting student fees and charges and managing the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes.

The Australian Government provides funding for VET to the state and territory governments through agreements which ensure funds are used to support national priorities. The Australian Government also funds and administers a range of programs which support the VET system.

1.1.4 How are the policy and implementation strategies aligned, for example with:

- **Policies in other sectors (health, economy, labour, rural development, etc);**
- **Other goals, such as gender equality, social cohesion, active citizenship, cultural and linguistic diversity;**
- **The creation of knowledge economies and/or the building or learning societies;**
- **National development plans and strategies or poverty reduction papers**

Australia's education policies aim to deliver outcomes which improve individual's welfare, workforce participation and productivity in order to improve Australia's competitiveness and foster a knowledge-based and innovative economy. Hence, education policies are closely aligned with labour market and economic policies. For instance, policies in relation to the allocation of new places in higher education and VET courses are linked to student demand and addressing skills shortages in the Australian economy. Education policies are also linked to international demand for training, as education related services are Australia's third largest export and of high importance to the economy.

Australia's education policies also contribute to the Australian Government's goal of promoting greater social inclusion. Methods by which education policies contribute to this goal include a focus on helping Australians from disadvantaged backgrounds to access education and programs to support individuals with financial or other barriers to participation in learning. Groups which are targeted for assistance include Indigenous Australians, people with a disability, people from a non-English speaking background, and jobseekers.

The Ministerial Council of Vocational and Technical Education, National Senior Officials Committee, National Action Groups and client advisory mechanisms ensure that the vocational education and training sector performs to the highest possible level and responds to the needs of government, industry, individuals and the community.

1.1.5 What are the main development challenges in your country? How are the ALE goals defined in relation to these challenges?

Australia's development challenges include managing the impact of the current period of prolonged economic growth and ensuring that people from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to education. Australia has been experiencing a period of strong economic growth and this, together with demographic structural ageing and globalisation, has led to a high demand for a wide range of skills to meet industry needs. Improving access and increasing participation in the higher education and VET sectors, particularly for those from low socio-economic backgrounds, is central to this challenge. This must be achieved in an environment of fiscal restraint designed to counteract inflation.

Changing patterns of work and the ageing of the Australian population also create pressures for education and skills development in all age groups, not just amongst school leavers. At the

same time, part-time, casual and contract employment now characterise work for half the Australian workforce. Skills Australia will assist the government by providing high quality advice on skills in demand to better target public investment in training.

1.1.6 Are there other policies in place that have an impact on ALE?

Participation in ALE and learning outcomes is affected by the financial assistance and incentives provided to learners and government policies governing how education is funded. Examples of these policies include:

- The Higher Education Loan Program (HECS-HELP, FEE-HELP and OS-HELP) which offers income contingent loan schemes to assist student's access higher education. The Commonwealth Scholarships Program provides financial support to eligible students to assist with the costs of higher education.
- The Australian Government and state and territory governments also reduce the cost to students of participating in VET courses through several initiatives which are described in section 1.2.6 of this report.

1.2 Financing of ALE. Please provide recent data on the following sections and describe trends since 1997

1.2.1 Public investment in ALE:

- a) Share of the budget allocated to adult education within the education sector (indicate measures, activities, responsible bodies);
- b) Share of the budget allocated to adult education from other sectors, made either directly or indirectly within their policies (indicate responsible ministries, describe activities)
- c) ALE in decentralised/local budgets (local governments, communities)
- d) Other investment eg, from regional funds and trans-national organisations

a) Expenditure on tertiary education by all levels of government in the 2006–07 financial year was \$A19.2 billion, which represented 5.3 per cent of total government expenditure.¹² Government expenditure on tertiary education has increased by more than 50 per cent since 1998–99 when expenditure was \$11.8 billion.¹³

b) The Australian Government departments of Defence, Immigration and Family and Community Services also provide adult education through the provision of education within their portfolios. Overall they provide only 2.3 per cent of the total expenditure on education, however.¹⁴

c) Adult learning and education that is funded by local governments is usually provided by community organisations. Local Government total education expenditure was \$77 million in 2005–06.¹⁵

d) Australia's public investment in ALE does not include any additional funding provided by regional funds or trans-national organisations.

¹² Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006-07, Government Finance Statistics, *Australia*. Catalogue No. 5512.0, ABS, Canberra.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/5512.02005-06?OpenDocument>

¹³ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005–06, *Government Finance Statistics, Education, Australia*. Catalogue No. 5518.0.55.001, ABS, Canberra.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/83DE0D4FE26527C6CA256A80007F6F8B?OpenDocument>

¹⁴ Department of Defence 2007, unpublished data.

¹⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005–06, *Government Finance Statistics, Australia*. Catalogue No. 5512.0, ABS, Canberra.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/5512.02005-06?OpenDocument>

1.2.2 Foreign bilateral/multilateral donor investment in ALE

Australia does not receive any funding for ALE from foreign donors.

1.2.3 Support to ALE from private/corporate sector

Provide data on annual expenditure from the private sector, provide relations to overall national budget, overall expenditure from selected national and multinational enterprises

Data published by the OECD shows that over the period 1995 to 2004, the proportion of expenditure on tertiary education institutions from public sources declined from 64.8 per cent to 47.2 per cent while expenditure from the private sector increased. Most of the private expenditure was from households (66 per cent) and the remainder was from other private entities.¹⁶

1.2.4 Civil society support to ALE (eg, religious institutions, unions, NGOs)

The Adult Community Education (ACE) sector provides education and training throughout Australia which complements education provided by TAFE Institutions and private providers. ACE delivers approximately 16 per cent of all accredited VET as well as language, literacy and numeracy programs, non-accredited training with vocational intent, and personal development and recreational courses. Community providers are often part of a religious institution, library, charity, community and/or other organisation and cater to all adults. They are particularly effective at engaging specific groups such as the jobless, Indigenous persons, people with a disability, people with low levels of education, migrants, older people and those in regional and remote areas.

The Australian Government provides funding to Adult Learning Australia (ALA), the national peak body for providers, consumers and representation to government. ALA also commissions and disseminates research relevant to adult education and training. ALA's research priorities and outcomes are discussed further in section 3.1 of this report.

1.2.5 Learners'/individuals contributions to ALE

Most Australian students undertaking formal education contribute part of the cost of their education while the Government pays the difference. There are currently some full fee paying students in the higher education sector, however, though such places for undergraduate students in public universities will be phased out from 2009. The large number of international students attending Australian institutions also pay the full cost of their education. In the VET sector individual contributions have increased by 36 per cent since 1997. Fees from individual's contributions were \$776.8 million in real terms in 1997 and \$1,052.9 million in 2006.¹⁷

¹⁶ OECD 2007, *Education at a Glance 2007*, OECD, Paris. P. 221.

¹⁷ National Centre for Vocational Education and Research, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: Financial information 2006*, Adelaide.

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistic/publications/1945.html>

1.2.6 Are there specific direct financial incentives in support of ALE? Eg, learning vouchers, scholarships, paid educational leave, special funds and funding schemes, etc? Are these specific to some programs or general schemes?

Adult learners are able to access the direct financial incentives which the Australian Government provides to learners in both the higher education and VET sectors. The assistance which is available to students participating in higher education includes:

- HECS-HELP, which is an income contingent loan scheme that assists Commonwealth supported students in higher education to pay their student contribution;
- FEE-HELP, an income contingent loan scheme to assist fee paying higher education students pay their tuition fees;
- Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarships assist students with costs associated with higher education;
- Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships assist regional and remote students with the costs associated with relocating to attend higher education; and
- OS-HELP loans which assist Commonwealth supported students undertake study towards their Australian higher education qualification overseas.

Much of the direct financial assistance within the VET sector is targeted toward supporting individuals undertaking Australian Apprenticeships. Apprentices, particularly those in skill shortage occupations, are supported through programs including:

- Support for Mid-Career Apprentices initiative – provides either the employer with a wage subsidy or the apprentice with income support through the first two years of the apprenticeship. This initiative is targeted at apprentices aged 30 years and over;
- Commonwealth Trade Learning Scholarship – provides two \$500 payments at the 12 and 24 month points of the apprenticeship;
- Apprenticeship Wage Top-Up – provides apprentices under the age of 30 with four \$500 payments made at the 6, 12, 18 and 24 month points of the apprenticeship;
- Tools For Your Trade – provides up to \$800 for the purchase of trade tools;
- Apprenticeship Training (Fee) Voucher program – provides apprentices with a voucher to claim up to \$500 for course fees incurred as part of the first and second years of their Australian Apprenticeship;
- Living Away From Home Allowance – supports apprentices who move away from home to commence or remain in an apprenticeship, or if they are homeless; and
- Fortnightly income support payments – Austudy and ABSTUDY programs delivered by Centrelink to eligible apprentices.

From late 2008, VET FEE-HELP, an extension of the FEE-HELP arrangements in higher education, will extend income contingent loans to full fee paying VET students studying diploma, advanced diploma, graduate certificate and graduate diploma courses. Diploma and advanced diploma courses must have credit transfer arrangements in place with a higher education provider approved to offer FEE-HELP.

Adults who are receiving income support payments may also be eligible to receive assistance to participate in education. Types of income support for these adult learners include supplementary payments, such as Pensioner Education Supplement (PES) and Education Entry Payment (EdEP), which are available to parents on income support who undertake approved study. PES assists certain disadvantaged groups, such as single parents and people with disabilities, to improve their chances of finding a job through undertaking an approved course of study. The EdEP is also payable in respect of an approved course of study and is paid once per annum as a lump sum for eligible income support recipients.

1.2.7 Are benchmarks/targets in relation to financing of ALE in place? In your context, what would be realistic benchmarks related to financing of ALE?

Financing benchmarks are in place for the VET sector and are specified under the Commonwealth-State Agreement for Skilling Australia's Workforce. States and territories are required to increase the number of training places, including apprenticeships in traditional trades and places for mature aged persons, people with a disability, and Indigenous people. Each state and territory has specified targets which must be met in order to obtain access to additional Australian Government funding. States and territories are also required to match components of funding and maintain activity levels in real terms.

While financing benchmarks are not in place for the higher education sector, financing outcome targets are set each year for DEEWR's higher education programs through the budget process.

2. Quality of Adult Learning and Education: Provision, Participation and Achievement

This section should describe the provision of ALE in terms of organisation, coordination, management and available infrastructure. Major trends which have emerged since 1997 should be highlighted and evidence provided through good practices.

2.1.1 Which institutions are responsible for managing and coordinating ALE at a national level?

As described in section 1.1.3, the Australian Government takes a national leadership role in higher education and vocational education and training and works collaboratively with states, territories and industry through DEEWR. Additional institutions and arrangements which oversee VET in Australia at the national level include:

- The National Governance and Accountability Framework establishes the decision-making processes and bodies responsible for training, as well as planning and performance monitoring arrangements to guide the operation and growth of the vocational education and training system.
- A Ministerial Council, National Senior Officials Committee, National Action Groups and client advisory mechanisms ensures that the vocational education and training sector performs at the highest possible level and responds to the needs of government, industry, individuals and communities.
- Industry provides input to policy development and planning, and to national research and analysis priorities, through key bodies such as: the National Industry Skills Committee; the National Quality Council; Action Groups for specific issues; and Individual Industry Skills Councils.

2.1.2 Please use Table 1 (attached at the end of the document) to list and describe briefly the ALE programs in Australia

Table 1 is attached at the end of this report.

2.1.3 What linkages exist between formal and non-formal approaches? Please describe

Non-formal education is supported by Australian governments as a means of encouraging individuals to develop their skills and may contribute towards the requirements for formal qualifications. Some accreditation for non-formal learning is attainable through recognition of prior learning within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). More generally, ACE is recognised as a way of building the self-confidence and self-esteem of adult learners, a necessary pre-condition for engagement in further education, training and work.

Funding for non-formal and informal learning is administered at the state and territory level. This funding is aimed at encouraging adult learners, and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to build skills necessary to enter formal education, training and work.

2.1.4 Does ALE lead to certification and national awards? If yes, please provide examples

Formal education in Australia often leads to a qualification that is nationally recognised through the AQF. The AQF is a unified, quality-assured framework for qualifications across all sectors of education and training and all state and territory governments. School, vocational education and training and academic qualifications are part of this single system which allows maximum flexibility in career planning and supports and encourages continuous learning pathways.

The AQF includes the eleven levels of qualifications in the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED). Certificates I–IV, Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas are generally provided through VET institutions. Bachelor Degrees, Graduate Certificates and Diplomas, Masters and Doctoral Degrees are typically provided by higher education institutions.

Statements of Attainment are also provided to individuals who complete one or more units of competency from a course which leads to a nationally recognised qualification.¹⁸

Non-formal education does not directly lead to a qualification but facilitates entry for many adults to formal education, training and work.

2.2 Participation in ALE

This section is concerned with participation rates, access to programs and the motivation and profile of target learners. Please provide information on participation in ALE activities and indicate trends since 1997 in the following areas

2.2.1 Statistical data on participation:

- a) **Provide an overall participation rate (% of population participating in an adult education activity) and difference compared to previous surveys. Please disaggregate according to gender, educational background and age;**
- b) **Show participation in specific programs (eg, literacy/numeracy programs, health (including HIV prevention) programs; income generating skills training; programs addressing special learning needs (eg, prisoners, migrants, disabled); technical skills training (including ICTs)). Please provide information, if available, on total numbers of participants disaggregated according to age and gender**

a) *Overall participation rate*

In addition to the participation statistics from the *Survey of Education and Work* discussed in the general overview at the start of this report, the first *Survey of Adult Learning* in Australia was conducted during 2006–07 and measured participation in education by people aged 25 to 64 years.¹⁹ This survey found that 38 per cent of Australians aged 25 to 64 had undertaken formal or non-formal learning in the previous 12 months. Of this group, 12 per cent participated in formal learning (structured learning leading to a qualification) and 30 per cent in non-formal learning (structured learning not leading to a qualification). The survey also found that 74 per cent of Australians aged 25 to 64 had undertaken informal learning (such as reading or using computer or internet) in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Demographics and educational attainment

Similar proportions of males and females participate in learning. Participation in learning declines as people age (48 per cent of 25 to 29 year olds compared to 20 per cent of 60 to 64 year olds). The *Survey of Adult Learning* found that people with higher levels of education were those most likely to be participating in further education (56 per cent of people with a Postgraduate degree or Graduate qualification compared to 24 per cent of persons without a qualification).

Trends since 1997

As the *Survey of Adult Learning* has so far only been conducted once, data is not available on trends in participation in adult learning at the national level. Data on the extent to which people aged 15–64 participate in training is available from the *Survey of Education and Work*, however, and shows that between 1997 and 2007 the participation rate in formal and non-formal education for 15 to 64 year olds remained steady at around 18 per cent, with most participants (95 per cent) undertaking formal education.²⁰

¹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001, *Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED)*, Catalogue No. 1272.0, ABS, Canberra.

¹⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, *Adult Learning, Australia*. Catalogue No. 4229.0, ABS, Canberra. <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/productsbytitle/B2F0DBF680A5CFD3CA2573B70011CFA7?OpenDocument>

²⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997–2007, *Education and Work, Australia*. Catalogue No. 6227.0, ABS, Canberra.

b) *Type of program*

Adults most commonly participate in ALE to improve their work-related skills. The *Survey of Adult Learning* found that 76 per cent of adults participating in formal learning were doing so for work related reasons, with management and commerce being the most common field of study (28 per cent of participants) followed by society and culture (21 per cent). A slightly higher (80 per cent) proportion of non-formal learning undertaken by adults is also work related. Management and commerce is also being the most common field of non-formal study (25 per cent) followed by health (22 per cent).

2.2.2 What existing surveys/studies have been undertaken on non-participation and groups that are difficult to reach? Please give main results in terms of who the excluded are, why they are being excluded and what kinds of support can be given

Non-Participants

The *Survey of Adult Learning* found that Adults who had not recently participated in education were more likely to be aged 40 to 44 years, have lower levels of educational attainment and be employed full-time than recent participants. Non-participants who were employed were most likely to work in the occupations of clerical and administrative workers or in the industries of retail, construction and manufacturing.

In addition to this survey finding, a number of groups have been identified as having a relative disadvantage in accessing higher education. These groups are: people from a low socio-economic background, people from a regional or remote background, people with a disability and people from a non-English speaking background. Statistics on the extent to which people from these groups access and participate in higher education are derived from the Higher Education Student Statistics collection and published annually.

Other Australian research has also been conducted on the participation of disadvantaged groups in higher education. This research includes Richard James (2007) *Social equity in a mass, globalised higher education environment: the unresolved issue of widening access to university*²¹ and Cardak, B. and Ryan, C. (2006) *Why are High Ability Individuals from Poor Backgrounds Under-represented at University?*²²

Barriers

The *Survey of Adult Learning* also collected information on the barriers to learning experienced by people wishing to participate. The most common barriers reported by these respondents were being too busy with work, at home or with leisure activities (reported by 44 per cent of people who wished to participate but were not able to do so) and that training was too expensive or unaffordable (18 per cent).

2.2.3 What existing surveys/studies have been undertaken on learner motivation?

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace relations funds the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth which provides a rich source of information on young adults' transitions from school to tertiary education and associated attitudes and intentions. Other

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/556A439CD3D7E8A8CA257242007B3F32?OpenDocument>

²¹ James, R. 2007, *Social equity in a mass, globalised higher education environment: the unresolved issue of widening access to university*, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, Melbourne.

<http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/downloads/Richard%20James.%20Dean's%20Lecture%20Series%20Sept2007.pdf>

²² Cardak, B. and Ryan, C., 2006, *Why are High Ability Individuals from Poor Backgrounds Under-represented at University?* <http://econrsss.anu.edu.au/Staff/ryan/pdf/La%20Trobe%20DP%20A06-04.pdf>

Departmental research is also undertaken or commissioned into these issues and will vary in focus from year to year. In 2008 the Department is commissioning research on the issue of early intervention strategies for disadvantaged groups, and their effectiveness in improving higher education outcomes.

2.2.4 What measures have been undertaken to mobilise learners and increase participation?

Australian governments seek to encourage participation in education through reducing the financial cost to learners. For example, the Australian Government has a number of programs in place to assist Australians from disadvantaged groups attend university. These include the provision of student income support through programs such as Austudy and funding for Commonwealth Scholarships. The Australian and state and territory governments also pay part of the cost of VET courses for students undertaking formal education.

The Australian Government also has several programs to assist job seekers to gain skills. These include:

- the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program, which has the goal of mobilising job seekers of working age (generally 15 to 64 years) who are registered as unemployed and looking for work with Centrelink or Job Network;
- the Productivity Places Program-Job Seekers which aims to assist job seekers to participate in training leading to endorsed national qualifications so as to acquire the skills they need to participate successfully in the workforce; and
- the Australian Apprenticeships Access Programme which provides disadvantaged job seekers with pre-vocational training and other forms of assistance.

In addition to financial assistance and programs targeted at job seekers, an annual Adult Learners' Week of community-based activities seeks to raise community awareness of, and engagement with, local adult learning options. These activities are coordinated by Adult Learning Australia (with funding from DEEWR) and the state and territory governments.

2.2.5 Are specific groups targeted by ALE provision? Which ones?

Australia's education policies include measures to help individuals from relatively disadvantaged groups access education. These measures are generally available to all individuals who meet the criterion, including adult learners. Improving access and participation for the following groups forms part of education policy in Australia

- Indigenous Australians;
- people from a low socio-economic status (SES) background;
- residents of regional and remote areas;
- people with a disability and
- people from a non-English speaking background.

An example of the forms of assistance which are provided for specific groups is the additional places in the VET sector which have been provided to people currently outside the workforce and people who are employed but need to upgrade their skills and qualifications. Places have also been targeted towards industries/occupations and geographical locations experiencing skills shortages. Child care assistance is also provided to people with young children through the provision of new child care centres, particularly at TAFE and university campuses.

2.2.6 Are there specific benchmarks in relation to participation in place? If yes, which ones? If not, what would be realistic benchmarks for participation in your context?

Participation benchmarks are in place for higher education. Participation and access statistics for all equity groups in higher education are derived from the Higher Education Student Statistics collection and are benchmarked against the participation and access statistics for the whole student population. They are also benchmarked against available sub-group population estimates derived from other data collections such as the Census of Population and Housing.

2.3 Monitoring and evaluating programs and assessing learning outcomes

This section should cover a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation perspective taking into account the programmatic and individual level

2.3.1 Do you assess the learning outcomes of ALE programs (national, regional and local community perspective/program perspective) and learners' achievements (learner perspective)? If so, what methods do you use?

The outcomes achieved by adult learners are measured as part of ongoing monitoring of the education system. The methods which are used include:

- The outcomes of learners in higher education are measured by the Course Experience Questionnaire, Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire, Graduate Destinations Survey and the national data collection (which measures progress, retention and attrition).
- Vocational education and training participants are asked to undertake the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) Student Outcomes Survey six months after they complete their qualifications. This survey measures student outcomes since completing their study, and data collected includes respondents' employment, income, further study and level of satisfaction with the training they completed.
- ALE programs and learners' achievements are also assessed in the context of awarding nationally recognised qualifications to individuals through the recognition of prior learning. Assessments which lead to these qualifications must be conducted by a registered training organisation in accordance with Australian Quality Training Framework. Methods used include written and oral examinations and reviews of skills-based competencies.
- The learning outcomes of participants in Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) programs are measured using a national reporting system and are assessed against the needs of the individual workplaces the programs are conducted in.
- Outcomes of learners in the LLNP and the program's performance are measured by monitoring learner's progress against their individual training plan and provider's success in meeting key performance indicators such as client attainment, retention and quality.

2.3.2 What tools and mechanisms are used to monitor and evaluate programs to ensure good quality?

There are a number of measures in place to monitor and evaluate the performance of Australian education programs. The quality requirements for higher education providers are set by the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* and the Australian Quality Training Framework 2007 (AQTF 2007) sets the requirements for VET providers. Individual measures used to monitor programs include:

- a quality assurance process that audits universities and other higher education providers. This process monitors institutions' internal evaluation mechanisms;
- the 2005–08 Commonwealth-State Agreement for Skilling Australia's Workforce which uses national targets and state and territory specific performance measures; abd

- the AQTF 2007 which requires registered training organisations which deliver vocational education and training to comply with a set of essential standards for registration which are subject to audit. The auditing bodies (which are state-based registering bodies) also have a set of national standards to which they must adhere.

A survey to measure the performance of the WELL program is also currently being developed.

2.3.3 To what extent are the results used for a) legislation b) policy formulation and c) program development?

The results of the monitoring mechanisms contribute to the development of policy directions. For instance, the development of the next (2009–2012) Commonwealth-state funding agreement for vocational education and training will be, in part, informed by the performance of the current agreement. The results of ongoing provider performance monitoring also inform the development and management of education policy, including legislative changes.

2.3.4 Are benchmarks in relation to outcomes in ALE in place? In your context what would be realistic benchmarks related to outcomes?

Outcome benchmarks are in place for both the higher education and VET sectors:

- For higher education benchmarking is conducted at the university level where institutions benchmark against the outcomes of similar institutions. For example, research universities benchmark against other research universities and technology universities benchmark against others with a technology focus.
- DEEWR also sets effectiveness indicators for publicly-funded higher education institutions. These indicators are:
 - trends in the number of domestic enrolments;
 - trends in the number of domestic postgraduate enrolments;
 - trend in the number of undergraduate completions;
 - trends in the number of post-graduate coursework completions;
 - the percentage of higher education graduates in full time employment within four months of completion of degree, of those available for work;
 - trends in graduate starting salaries as a proportion of Average Weekly Earnings; and
 - trends in number of all Indigenous Australian students by selected higher education course level categories.
- For the VET sector the indicative measures associated with the Council of Australian Governments' outcomes and targets (outlined in Section 1.1.2 above) will measure progress related to outcomes:
 - Literacy and numeracy achievement of working age people in national and international testing
 - Proportion of 20-64 year olds with or working towards the post school qualifications in: Certificate III and Certificate IV; Diploma & Advanced Diploma
 - Level and proportion of total investment in structured (including nationally recognised) training by industry, individuals, businesses and governments
 - Proportion of graduates employed after completing training
 - Extent of skills shortages, recruitment difficulties and labour market vacancies
 - Proportion of people employed at or above the level of their qualification

2.4 Adult educators/facilitators' status and training

This section should elaborate on the human resources available for ALE and describe key initiatives and changes in this regard since 1997

2.4.1 What educational qualifications/training are required for adult

educators/facilitators? What continuing/in-service training measures are in place?

2.4.2 Is adult education considered a specific profession, and are there higher education institutions providing such qualifications

2.4.3 Please indicate the proportion of adult educators/facilitators in relation to the overall number of teaching personnel in your country

2.4.4 What are the terms of employment and remuneration in ALE?

It is not possible to identify all adult educators within the Australian education workforce as most ALE is delivered within the general education system in Australia. Most adult learners participate in courses designed for a general student population and are taught by trainers with non-specialist teaching qualifications. There are some specialised ALE teachers, however, and the higher education sector offers qualifications in ALE. Universities offer specific courses in Adult Education ranging from short professional and personal courses to Masters in Adult Education. These qualifications are not a requirement for teaching adult learners, however.

For vocational education and training, training and assessment which results in a nationally-recognised qualification must be conducted by trainers and assessors who:

- have a Certificate IV in training and assessment (a national qualification);
- have the relevant vocational competencies at least to the level being delivered or assessed; and
- continue developing their vocational and training and assessment competencies to support continuous improvements in delivery of the Registered Training Organisation's services.

Universities vary as to the qualifications of their tutors, lecturers and professors, and there are no formal qualifications required for adult educators in the higher education sector.

Different arrangements for language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) teachers exist across different institutions (for example, TAFE, community colleges, etc.). Workplace practitioners are required to hold a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training and appropriate qualifications to deliver language, literacy and numeracy training. This usually entails a postgraduate qualification in adult literacy, and additional industry-specific training. The LLN Program requires adult educators/ facilitators to have a teaching qualification, a postgraduate qualification in Teaching English or Adult Literacy with at least three years experience. Providers are also required to outline any professional development they will be offering staff in their Annual Report, and to allow staff to attend moderation workshops run by the LLNP's Independent Verifiers annually.

Australia operates with a flexible and decentralised labour market and most employees are covered by enterprise-level certified agreements. As a result, there are no standard terms of employment for Australian ALE staff, and with over 2,000 higher education and vocational education and training providers and many more providers of non-formal education across Australia it is not possible to generalise about terms of employment.

3 Research, Innovation and Good Practice

3.1 Research studies in the field of adult learning

This section should reflect the latest research developments in the field of ALE

3.1.1 Which key studies in adult education have been undertaken in Australia during the last 5 years?

3.1.2 What were the major questions addressed and prompted in these studies?

3.1.3 What were the key findings?

3.1.4 To what extent did these findings inform policies and practice? How did they influence practice? Please give examples.

Research into adult learning and education in Australia has been conducted by governments, academics and research and advocacy organisations. This research has included investigations into the demand for ALE and best practice in delivering training.

The former Department of Education, Science and Training (now the Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations) has funded a number of key studies into ALE and VET which have analysed the influence education has on workforce outcomes. These have included:

- a discussion paper on the role community education and training can play in responding to economic and demographic challenges²³;
- an inquiry into training job seekers which resulted in two reports; *Securing Success* and *Furthering Success*²⁴; and
- Adult Learning Australia (ALA) research on adult community education (ACE) as it relates to demographic change, building social capital and workforce outcomes.

The department is continuing to support research into ALE and adult skills. This includes participating in the development of the OECD's Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) and funding projects which consider improved approaches to effectively and efficiently address the need to increase the skills of new and existing workers to meet current and future industry needs.

Key findings from research funded by DEST and DEEWR include:

- best-practice training models for adults entering or re-joining the workforce;
- potential contributions by the VET sector to address skills shortages; and
- that the best way to overcome skills shortages and adjust to technological and industrial change is to increase workforce participation among adults.

In *Skilling Australia for the Future*, the current government has confirmed that literacy and numeracy skills are inextricably combined with the strength and flexibility of the workforce base and the general wellbeing of the population.

ALA studies have investigated the potential benefits from lifelong learning, especially for the disadvantaged, and options to improve the delivery of ACE and improve outcomes. ALA's research on adult learning has included investigations of ACE and demographic change (for

²³ Barton, B. 2006, *Community Education and National Reform*. Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra. <http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/ronlyres/A3C3E888-F668-451A-BDA6-D7264A6E5B1E/14795/CommunityEducationDiscussionPaper.pdf>

²⁴ Department of Education, Science and Training 2003, *Securing Success: good practice in training people aged 45 and over who are disadvantaged in the labour market*, DEST, Canberra. http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/publications_resources/profiles/securing_success_report.htm and Department of Education, Science and Training 2004, *Furthering Success: education, training and employment transitions for disadvantaged older workers*, DEST, Canberra. http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/publications_resources/profiles/furthering_success.htm

example, *Adult Learning and Australia's Ageing Population*²⁵), the role of ACE in improving workforce outcomes (for example, *ACE's Role in Developing Australia's Human Capital*²⁶) and adult learning and social networks (for example, *Social Learning Capital*²⁷). The findings from this research show that ACE can make a significant contribution to human and social capital.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has also conducted a number of key surveys of adult skills and participation in education in the last five years. These include the annual *Survey of Education and Work* (SEW), the 2006 *Adult Literacy and Life Skills* (ALLS) Survey, and the 2006–2007 *Survey of Adult Learning* (SAL). The ALLS survey found that almost half of Australian adults lacked requisite skills to function in the knowledge economy²⁸ and the SEW provides up to date information on education participation and attainment. Key statistics from the SEW and SAL were identified in section 2.2 of this report.

3.2 Innovations and examples of good practice

What innovations and/or exemplary programs in ALE have been developed since 1997 that make a significant difference in Australia and could be instructive for other countries, with regard to:

3.2.1 Policy formulation, financing, teaching/learning methods

There has been considerable development of Australia's post-school education system since 1997. Innovative and successful programs in the higher education sector include:

- *Learning and Teaching Performance Fund* – this program rewards higher education providers that best demonstrate excellence in learning and teaching for undergraduate students.
- *Equity Programs (Disability Support Program and Equity Support Program)* – this program assists eligible higher education providers to undertake activities that promote equality of opportunity in higher education.
- *Higher Education Loan Program (HELP)* – this program encourages student choice and facilitates access to higher education by providing loans to eligible students to pay their student contribution. The income-contingent repayment arrangements under HELP ensure that only those people whose income level reaches the minimum repayment threshold are required to make compulsory repayments. Although HELP debts are indexed, there is no interest charged on HELP loans. The Australian Government is therefore also bearing the deferral costs of the loans and for those loans that are never repaid due to low income.
- *Learning Scholarships* – the Commonwealth Learning Scholarships program provides financial support to eligible undergraduate students to assist with the costs associated with higher education. There are two types of scholarships – one for general education costs and one for accommodation costs.
- Effective pathways between VET and higher education to provide flexibility for students to respond to changing employment needs and personal interests. Movement from VET to higher education has been growing for more than a decade.

²⁵ McIntyre, J. 2005, *Adult Learning and Australia's Aging Population. A Discussion Paper*. ALA, Canberra. http://www.ala.asn.au/docs/Ageing_learning_JMc.pdf

²⁶ Choy S., Haukka S. and Keyes E. 2006, *ACE's Role in Developing Australia's Human Capital*. ALA, Canberra. http://www.ala.asn.au/report/Choy_Haukka_ACE.pdf

²⁷ Baker, D. 2006, *Social Learning Capital - interlinking social capital, lifelong learning and quality learning conversations*. ALA, Canberra.

<http://www.ala.asn.au/report/Social%20Learning%20Capital%20NZ%20Conf%20paper%20May2006.pdf>

²⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, *Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, Summary Results, Australia*, Catalogue No. 4228.0, ABS, Canberra.

[http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4228.0Main+Features12006%20\(Release\)?OpenDocument](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4228.0Main+Features12006%20(Release)?OpenDocument)

- Government support for the establishment of the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education at the University of South Australia. The key objective of the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education is to inform and lead the higher education sector in demonstrating and researching best practice to attract, retain and progress students from the targeted equity groups. It will also act as a national repository of funding initiatives, programs and exemplars of student equity policy best practice.

The vocational education and training sector has also introduced innovative programs since 1997. These include:

- The endorsement of the first national Training Packages in 1997. Training Packages provide the basic building blocks for training programs and are developed by industry. They provide the platform on which training providers can customise their own programs to better meet the needs of individual clients.
- The introduction of the New Apprenticeships system (now known as the Australian Apprenticeships system) in 1998. This system built on the previous apprenticeship and traineeship systems but provides a simpler, more flexible and more relevant training system that is responsive to the needs of individual employers and industries. The number of Australian Apprenticeships has risen significantly since 1998.
- This implementation of the User Choice scheme in 1998. This scheme was introduced by the Australian Government in January 1998 to create a more competitive, client-driven market in the provision of off-the-job training for new apprentices. It allows employers and their apprentices or trainees to choose the organisation which will deliver the off-the-job component and directs the associated public funding to the chosen provider. It also provides more choice over other important aspects of training including content, timing, location and mode of delivery.
- The endorsement of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) in 2001. The AQTF is a set of nationally agreed standards to ensure the quality of vocational education and training services throughout Australia.
- The establishment of ten industry skills councils in 2003 to replace the Industry Training Advisory Board. These councils were established to enable industry to lead the vocational and technical education system.
- The *Skilling Australia's Workforce Act 2005* created a new national training system and introduced new governance arrangements and a new funding agreement between the Australian Government and the state and territory governments.
- The introduction of the AQTF 2007 which revised the AQTF to improve the quality of training and assessment in the VET sector. The new arrangements encourage greater participation of licensing and industry regulatory bodies in ensuring the quality of training, and will also achieve greater national consistency through new standards for state and territory registering bodies.

3.2.2 Mobilisation of learners, involvement of learners in program design, emergence of learners as partners

3.2.3 What are the above listed examples considered as innovations in your country?

Many Australian education providers survey learners at the end of individual courses and qualifications to seek feedback on learners' satisfaction and invite suggestions for how the training's delivery could be improved. This feedback is used by the providers to improve course design so that it better meets learners' needs.

4. Adult Literacy

4.1 How is literacy defined in your country? Have there been any changes since 1997?

Please explain

Literacy is not only about skills acquisition but the application of these skills in multiple environments for multiple purposes. Language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) are crucial underpinnings to learning to learn and generic skills and essential skills for the Australian population. Adequate LLN skills allow adults to participate fully in the labour force, use literacy skills at work, participate in adult education and training and use literacy at home and in the community.

4.2 Which new policies have been adopted and implemented

There has been no new national policy statement on adult literacy in Australia since 1991. There has, however, been ongoing implementation of a number of programs and projects intended to improve the LLN skills of the Australian population. A comprehensive response to the 2006 ALLS survey is currently underway and Australia is also participating in the development of PIAAC.

4.3 Please give examples of effective practice and innovative literacy programs

Examples of effective practice and innovative literacy programs in Australia include:

- The Adult Literacy National Project (ALNP) which aims to fund and promote research, resources and projects in the field of adult literacy. The ALNP Innovative Projects are grants allocated to successful applicants to develop pioneering approaches to language, literacy and numeracy resource development and program delivery with national applicability. ALNP Targeted Resources are allocated to strategic projects of national significance and relevance to adult literacy across Australia.
- Language Literacy Numeracy Program (LLNP), including Innovative and Research Projects which support LLNP objectives through additional research, specialist services and post-program monitoring. The program seeks to improve jobseekers' language, literacy and/or numeracy with the expectation that such improvements will enable them to participate more effectively in training or in the labour force and lead to greater gains for society in the longer term.
- The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) which is available for refugee and humanitarian entrants, victims of torture and trauma and other recent immigrants, providing up to 810 hours of English language tuition.
- The Workplace English Language Literacy (WELL) program funds LLN training for employees. WELL also allocates funding to strategic projects with a national scope that support LLN training across one or more industry sectors. WELL funding is also available for the development of resources, including training materials, assessment and reporting methods, and professional development resources for industry trainers/assessors. In 2006–2007 more than 16,000 people were trained through WELL projects. The 2006 WELL evaluation found it to be a unique program providing workplace-based LLN training embedded in vocational training, and tailored to the needs of individual businesses.²⁹

²⁹ Department of Education, Science and Training 2006, *Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Evaluation Report*. DEST, Canberra.

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/publications_resources/profiles/WELL_Evaluation_Report.htm

4.4 Please illustrate how policies and programs focus on gender. Describe the importance given to women and other target groups.

The Australian Government's adult literacy programs have differing characteristics.

- While WELL projects are not specifically targeted to any particular demographic group, they do target equity groups as people with low English language literacy and numeracy skills are over-represented here. In 2006–2007, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people of non-English speaking background were over-represented in WELL courses, proportionate to the mainstream population. In 2007, DEEWR established a key performance indicator designed to measure, and increase, Indigenous participation.
- Young males and isolated females are included in the LLNP's target groups. In addition, some LNP providers are able to offer Complementary Training, which allows more flexibility for providers to create courses that are parallel to the core delivery of the Initial, Basic and Advanced streams of training. CT is intended to target disadvantaged client groups, including indigenous people, young males, people with disabilities, isolated female clients, and/or cases of age-based workforce exclusion.
- The AMEP targets refugee and humanitarian entrants, victims of torture and trauma and other recent immigrants.

4.5 To what extent do policies and programs aim and building literate environments? What progress could be achieved?

Literacy and numeracy programs have been established which seek to provide open and supportive environments for adult learning, including moving programs out of the classroom and into a workplace setting. Although they are focussed on equipping individuals with the LLN skills required to participate in the workplace, government-funded LLN programs have benefited learners more broadly in assisting them to relate more productively to their family and community. Recently, the government has discussed the social policy aspects of adult education and social inclusion and this may broaden the scope for government investment in this area.

The Australian Government's two main adult literacy programs seek to build literate environments:

- WELL training projects contextualise literacy learning, that is, they shape LLN training around the particular tasks that the employee undertakes in the workplace and tailor the overall training to the needs of the organisation.
- The LLNP seeks to improve clients' language, literacy and/or numeracy with the expectation that such improvements will enable them to participate more effectively in training or in the labour force and lead to greater gains for society in the longer term.

5. Expectations of CONFINTEA VI and future perspectives on ALE

5.1 What outcomes do you expect from CONFINTEA VI?

Australia hopes that CONFINTEA VI encourages a continuous commitment by UNESCO and member states to the promotion of adult learning and education and improvement of participation in, and access to, ALE programs. The national reports on the developments in ALE among member states will also be of value by encouraging an exchange of best practice in delivering ALE.

5.2 Please list the main issues that adult education will have to address and describe future perspectives for the development of policies and practices in adult education and adult learning.

The main issues adult education needs to address in Australia include:

- responding to the skill shortages which have emerged as a result of:
 - Australia's period of prolonged economic growth;
 - Australia's ageing population, which necessitates more training targeted to adult learners; and
 - the demands of globalisation;
- adjusting to advances in information and communication technology – there is a need to reskill existing older workers and retrain adults returning to the workforce;
- fostering the development of language, literacy and numeracy skills and self-confidence of adults, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds;
- streamlining skills development through a range of approaches such as recognition of prior learning; and
- increasing participation in formal and non-formal learning by engaging the disengaged in order to increase social inclusion.

Table 1

In addition to the programs listed below, the Australian Qualifications Framework outlines the awards available in Australia and is available at <http://www.aqf.edu.au/aqfqual.htm>. A list of all courses offered by higher education providers is at: <http://www.goingtouni.gov.au/CourseFinderDisclaimer.htm>

Program	a) Provider			b) Area of learning			c) Target group/s	d) Programme cost	e) Funding source
	Public / State	CSO/ NGO	Private	General competencies	Technical skills	Knowledge generation, innovation			
Higher Education	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	All Australians	\$8.4 billion	Australian Government funding allocation through education portfolios (2008–09 estimate)
Vocational Education and Training	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	All Australians	\$2.9 billion per annum from the Australian Government (Note includes school students participating in VET programmes - costings without these students is not available) <i>This includes all funding for programs listed below.</i> The state and territory governments also provide very considerable funding for VET.	Australian Government administered funds 2008–09. This includes funds under the Commonwealth-State Agreement for Skilling Australia’s Workforce; Annual Appropriations; and the Australian Technical Colleges Act
Workplace English Literacy and Language Program encourages employers	✓	✓	✓	✓			Australian workers with poor to very poor language, literacy	\$15 million per annum	Australian Government administered funds

<p>to invest in language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) training, integrated with vocational training, to meet the employment and training needs of workers whose language, literacy and/or numeracy levels place them at risk of losing their jobs; prevent them from participating in further training or promotion; and/or hinder them from doing their job effectively.</p>								<p>and numeracy skills (within Level 1 and 2 in the International Survey of Adult Literacy).</p>		
<p>Australian Apprenticeships Access Programme provides pre-vocational training and support to assist disadvantaged individuals obtain and maintain an Australian Apprenticeship. Alternatively, a job seeker may be supported into employment, further education or training. The programme provides nationally recognised training, is based on labour market needs and is linked to an Australian Apprenticeship</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>				<p>Disadvantaged job seekers</p>	<p>\$26 million per annum</p>	<p>Australian Government administered funds</p>

pathway.									
Joint Indigenous Funding Pool (JIFP) strategically targets funding to maximise education and training opportunities and improve VET outcomes for Indigenous students.	✓		✓		✓			\$23 million over three years. States and territories have agreed to match the funding provided to them over three years (2005-08).	2005-2008 Commonwealth-State Agreement for Skilling Australia's Workforce
Training Initiatives for Indigenous Adults in Regional and Remote Communities funds projects designed to attract engage and support Indigenous adults in regional and remote communities to access vocational education and training opportunities. (In WA, Qld, SA and NT)	✓		✓	✓	✓		Indigenous Australians	\$21 million over four years (2007-11) to be matched by participating States and Territory.	Australian Government administered funds
Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program seeks to improve clients' language, literacy and/or numeracy with the expectation that such improvements will enable them to participate more effectively in training or in the labour force and lead to greater gains for society in the longer term.	✓	✓	✓				Job seekers of working age (generally 15 to 64 years of age) who are registered as unemployed and looking for work with Referring Agencies	\$65 million in 2008-09	Australian Government administered funds

<p>Productivity Places Program funds new training places aimed at higher level qualifications with an emphasis on higher level qualifications which specifically respond to the current and emerging skills needs of industry.</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Job seekers and existing workers.	\$1.9 billion over 5 years	Australian Government administered funds
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