

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULT LEARNERS IN VICTORIA



PATHWAYS TO PARTICIPATION AND JOBS

DISCUSSION PAPER



Acknowledgments

The Department of Education and Training (the Department) acknowledges and pays respects to Elders and all Victorian Aboriginal communities. We honour and respect Traditional Owners, past and present, and value the rich culture and history of the First Peoples of this land.



Education
and Training

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CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

In our thriving Victorian economy, every individual should have the opportunity to have a meaningful life, be able to participate successfully in our communities and find sustainable work.

I first started working in adult community education thirty years ago. It was there, working with vulnerable Victorians to build their literacy, numeracy and foundation skills, that I developed an unfailing passion to make a difference in the lives of community members experiencing disadvantage.

I feel honoured to be part of a project where the Minister for Training and Skills and the Victorian Government recognise the valuable impact of adult community education on the lives of Victorians experiencing disadvantage.

We know that too many Victorians do not have the literacy, numeracy or vocational skills required to access and secure jobs, leaving them exposed to issues of unemployment, economic exclusion and social isolation. *Future Opportunities for Adult Learners in Victoria* aims to arrest this trend. If we do not act now, these community members will face even more hurdles to participate in a full and positive life. It is a moral challenge which the adult community education sector is well placed to address.

The *Future Opportunities for Adult Learners in Victoria* Discussion Paper is the product of significant consultation, research and analysis. The Discussion Paper leverages the passion and ingenuity of the adult community education sector and presents a series of key issues for your feedback and input. I encourage you to have your say on the issues it raises.

By working together in a constructive, learner-centred way, we can make a genuine difference to the lives of some of the most vulnerable Victorians.



Maria Peters, Independent Chairperson
Future Opportunities for Adult Learners in Victoria



LEARNER CASE STUDY – THE POWER OF ADULT COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Kylie* left school in Year 11 and struggled to get motivated to re-engage in education. There are limited local employment options in her regional home town, and those opportunities that do come up require applicants to have work experience or a Year 12 completion.

After a couple of years on unemployment benefits, Kylie heard about an adult community education program being run in partnership with the local hospital.

The program, 'Kick Start Your Career in the Health Sector', taught health industry-specific skills and workplace literacy, culminating in a one week placement in hospital.

Building her confidence over the eight weeks, Kylie discovered a strong passion for health care and an aptitude for administration. She actively participated in facilitated discussions, was a positive and enthusiastic class member and particularly enjoyed the 'in-class' presentations from health service managers.

Kylie said she gained "first-hand experience to lots of areas inside the hospital such as nursing, allied health, administration, food services, personal care and cleaning. It helped me decide what I want to do".

Kylie gained a traineeship with the hospital in the Human Resources Department and commenced a Certificate IV in Business Administration.

**Name has been changed.*

PROJECT PURPOSE AND DISCUSSION PAPER OUTLINE

Introduction

The nature of work is changing and so are the skills required to thrive in the workplace. With employment growth a continued focus in Victoria, it is critical that all Victorians have the opportunity to develop the literacy, numeracy, vocational and employability skills required to secure meaningful jobs, regardless of background or socio-economic status.

In Victoria, there are 650,000 adults at the lowest levels of literacy, including 265,000 workers with low educational attainment in low skill jobs, and more than 17,000 15 to 19 year olds who are not engaged in employment, education or training.

Responding to these challenges efficiently, effectively and at an appropriate scale will require a broad and multi-faceted strategy. The adult community education sector is the critical link between the needs of these Victorians and an opportunity for a better life, by providing them with education and training choices best suited to their individual needs.

IN VICTORIA, THERE ARE 650,000 ADULTS AT THE LOWEST LEVELS OF LITERACY, INCLUDING 265,000 WORKERS WITH LOW EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN LOW SKILL JOBS, AND MORE THAN 17,000 15 TO 19 YEAR OLDS WHO ARE NOT ENGAGED IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING.



Purpose of the Future Opportunities for Adult Learners in Victoria project

In April 2018, the Department of Education and Training commissioned the *Future Opportunities for Adult Learners in Victoria* (FOAL) project to ensure more at risk Victorians have access to high quality training.

To achieve this, the FOAL Discussion Paper considers whether the adult community education sector is equipped with the system-level supports and capabilities it needs to support at-risk Victorians into social and economic participation.

A robust process has informed the development of the FOAL Discussion Paper, including the appointment of an Independent Chairperson, the establishment of an expert Reference Group, a literature review and an examination of adult community education sector data.

To support the development of this Discussion Paper, a targeted sample of adult community education providers and industry, community and academic stakeholders (Appendix 1) were invited to take part in structured consultations and interviews to reflect on current practices, identify opportunities for improvement and suggest policy options to move good practices to a wider scale.

Adult and Community Education Victoria (ACEVic), a peak body for the Learn Local sector, coordinated roundtable consultations with groups of co-ordinators or managers of Learn Local Organisations. Consultation were held in North Melbourne, Moe, Geelong and Bendigo.

Another 10 stakeholder groups representing TAFE institutes, industry and academia were interviewed in May and June 2018, and submissions were provided based on the FOAL Terms of Reference.

FOAL Terms of Reference

Examine the connection of adult community education across the Victorian education system and provide advice on disconnects, gaps and possible improvements to facilitate educational and employment outcomes

- Consider opportunities to scale up best practice approaches to literacy, numeracy and foundation skills programs, with a focus on:
 - » Victorians at the lowest levels of literacy
 - » Workers placed at risk by a transitioning economy
 - » 15 to 19-year old early school leavers who are not engaged in education or employment
- Consider the appropriate connection of pre-accredited training to accredited training, such as the Certificate of General Education for Adults
- Provide recommendations to enhance connections between adult community education and the broader education system to further enhance learner outcomes

Recommend policy settings to enhance the reach, impact, availability and targeting of literacy, numeracy and foundation skills programs

- Provide recommendations to increase the number of Victorians with the lowest levels of literacy participating in training
- Consider options to strengthen literacy and numeracy assessment systems to enhance learner-centred targeting of programs
- Consider options to better measure the progress and transition of learners through literacy, numeracy and foundation skills programs
- Consider appropriate steps to prepare the adult community education sector to deliver a higher volume of literacy, numeracy and foundation skills programs

Recommend options to increase employment outcomes for learners in adult community education

- Highlight the key factors most likely to result in a transition from literacy, numeracy and foundation skills programs to employment, and consider how these factors can be replicated at scale
- Consider best-practice vocation-specific literacy, numeracy and foundation skills programs, and how these programs impacted learner transitions and outcomes.
- Consider options to develop strengthened partnership models between training providers and growth industry employers
- Consider scalable and best practice partnership models between training providers and labour market programs, such as Jobs Victoria Employment Networks
- Consider approaches to post-placement support which may enhance the sustainability of literacy, numeracy and foundation skills learner transitions into further education and training or employment

Consider appropriate models of delivery and support to increase the engagement and transition of high-needs learners in adult community education

- Highlight the engagement and support practices leading to successful enrolment and transition of high-needs learners in adult community education
- Consider partnership and practice approaches that lead to strong outcomes for high-needs learners, and how the application of these approaches could be broadened
- Consider whether the current training provider mix and settings meet the needs of high-needs learners, and recommend options to improve outcomes for learners in adult community education

Out of scope

- Reform of the structure and nature of accredited training packages
- School-based responses to literacy, numeracy and foundation skills
- Consideration of changes to the context in which the Victorian VET system operates
- Consideration of changes to the funding streams model within Skills First, the allocation of funds between targeted funding streams and the demand-driven budget
- Community Services Funding allocated to TAFE Institutes

FOAL governance arrangements

FOAL is overseen by an expert Reference Group, including representatives from the Learn Local sector, TAFE institutes and industry.

The core members of the FOAL Reference Group are:

Chair: Maria Peters, retired CEO of Chisholm Institute

- David Latina, Deputy Secretary, Higher Education and Skills Group, DET
- Chair, Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board (formerly Sue Christophers; new Chair yet to be appointed)
- Neil Coulson, Victorian Skills Commissioner
- Emma King, CEO, Victorian Council Of Social Services
- Sue Geals, Chair, Adult and Community Education VIC
- Andrew Williamson, CEO, Victorian TAFE Association
- David Coltman, Director, Victorian TAFE Association
- Frank Evans, Chief Executive Officer, Central Gippsland Health
- Jeff Griffiths, Managing Director and Owner, Endeavour Petroleum
- Shelley Mallett, Professorial Fellow, Social Policy, University of Melbourne

The FOAL Reference Group is supported by an Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC) including executive representation from across the Victorian Government, and a Working Group of senior Department of Education and Training staff.

Overview of this paper

The first two chapters offer some quantitative data and 'consultation snapshots' to assist in providing comment on the questions in Chapter 3.

- Chapter 1 provides a set of comprehensive data on the cohort of Victorians at the greatest risk of missing out on educational and employment opportunities due to their current skill levels. The chapter provides information about the Victorians with the lowest levels of literacy and the impact this has on their learning and employment choices and capacity to deal with the shifting demands of the workplace. This chapter reflects some of the findings from the consultation process that relate to learner cohorts.
- Chapter 2 provides a current snapshot of adult community education effort and the role that pre-accredited training plays in providing flexible learning opportunities for adult learners who require a gateway back into learning, skills to support their entry to employment or just in time skill 'top ups' to support work transition or advancement.
- Chapter 3 describes the three major themes that emerged from the FOAL project's consultation, literature review and data analysis. The chapter also presents, for each of the three themes, relevant case studies and other evidence, along with potential reform options and questions to guide consultation on this Discussion Paper. You are invited to make submissions in response to the options and questions in chapter 3, particularly where matters raised align with your interest and expertise. The themes, analysis, options and questions align to the FOAL project scope.

Key terms used throughout this paper are defined at Appendix 2.

Opportunity for comment

The Department of Education and Training invites responses to the Discussion Questions in Chapter 3 of this Discussion Paper, by written submission no later than **24 August 2018**.

Please email your submission to
Future.Adult.Learners@edumail.vic.gov.au

A final report will be prepared and submitted to the Victorian Government after written submissions have been received.



CHAPTER 1:

VICTORIANS AT RISK OF FALLING THROUGH THE GAPS

Victoria leads the nation in jobs creation, but too many Victorians do not have the literacy, numeracy or vocational skills required to secure their fair share of these jobs, leaving them exposed to the risk of unemployment, economic exclusion and social isolation.

Providing support and access to education and social participation is a moral imperative, but also a key ingredient of economic growth and productivity.

With employment growth a continued focus of the Victorian Government, it is critical that all Victorians have the opportunity to develop the literacy, numeracy, vocational and employability skills required to secure these jobs, regardless of background or socio-economic status.

Evidence shows the cohorts most at risk of being locked out of a dynamic economy are the:

- Estimated 650,000 adult Victorians at the lowest levels of literacy; including:
 - » Approximately 265,000 adult Victorians with low educational attainment in low skills jobs; and
 - » Almost 20,000 15 to 19 year olds not engaged in education, training or employment.

Victorians with the lowest levels of literacy

In the modern economy, information-processing skills and other high-level cognitive and interpersonal skills are increasingly necessary. More and more employers require their staff to have industry-specific literacy and numeracy skills to remain competitive in the modern market. Individuals with low skill levels, especially low levels of literacy and numeracy, risk being excluded from participating in the labour market, education and training and other social and civic activities.

This is a significant issue for Victoria. An international survey of adult competencies conducted in 2012 found that around 650,000 Victorians were at the very lowest literacy levels and 970,500 Victorians have very low levels of numeracy (ABS 2013)¹ **(Figure 1).**

Literacy is also a significant issue for working age Victorians. The same survey found that just under 46% of adult Victorians lacked the literacy skills needed to meet the complex demands of everyday life and work in a knowledge-based economy (ABS 2012).²

¹ The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) survey measures literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments (PSTRE). Low-level literacy is defined as being at or below level 1 on the 5-level scale

² To be considered functionally literate in a 21st century world, adults are considered to require skills above Level 2 on the proficiency scale developed by the OECD for the PIAAC survey (Anderson et al. 2014).

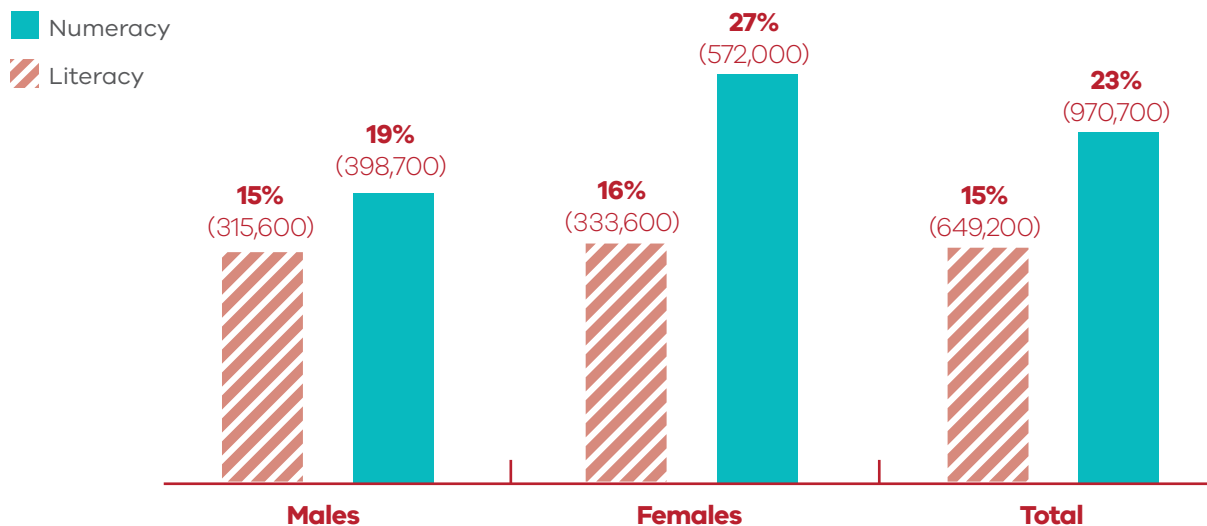


Figure 1: Proportion of Victorians aged 15-74 years with Level 1 or below in PIAAC literacy and numeracy skill level (ABS, 2011-12).

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse community members

At the 2016 Census, 28.4% of Victoria's population was born overseas. Victorians come from more than 200 countries, speak 260 languages and dialects and follow 135 religious faiths.

Most of the overseas-born Victorians came to Australia as migrants hoping to find a better life for themselves and their children, with many more recent arrivals as refugees from conflicts in the republics of the former Yugoslavia, the Horn of Africa, the Middle East and Afghanistan. These new Victorians utilise their developing English language, literacy and numeracy skills to study, get a job, provide for their families and become productive members of their communities.

WHAT DID WE HEAR IN CONSULTATION?

There has been a cohort shift in demand for literacy and numeracy courses

The demand for literacy provision is changing, with an increase in native English speakers needing assistance, rather than literacy classes catering primarily for CALD community members seeking English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes.

However, native English speakers can be difficult to engage in adult community education and require different engagement strategies, from marketing methods to the quality and focus of program delivery, such as literacy and numeracy embedded in employability skills training.

The economic impacts of low literacy

Victorians with low literacy and numeracy are 1.7 times more likely to be long-term unemployed when compared to the average Victorian.

OECD research indicates that increasing the literacy level of a country by 1% leads to a 2.5% rise in labour productivity and a 1.5% increase in GDP per head (Coulombe, Tremblay & Marchand 2004).

Adult community education, and in particular pre-accredited training delivered by Learn Local organisations, can be an effective tool to prepare learners to commence and complete accredited training. Victoria will benefit from a fully engaged society and highly skilled competitive workforce.

Why does this issue need to be addressed now?

There are strong links between the economic future of the state, and the education and economic participation of Victorians at the lowest levels of literacy. The Victorian Government's Education State agenda is providing a robust response to the literacy and numeracy requirements of young people in the schooling system. As such, there is a need for a clear plan of action for the adult community education sector, linked to the goal of Victoria achieving literacy and numeracy levels above the Australian average.

Learning is not a 'set and forget' activity. Just because an individual has experienced disruption or failure in their learning does not mean they are unable to re-engage given the right support. But learning momentum is important and must be part of a culture that says that learning is a lifelong process and can be adjusted to meet the varied needs of life.

A failure to target the low literacy and numeracy of Victorian adults would come at a significant social and financial cost, and would weaken Victoria's ability to meet the emerging workforce needs of a transitioning economy.

THERE IS A NEED FOR A
CLEAR PLAN OF ACTION FOR
THE ADULT COMMUNITY
EDUCATION SECTOR, LINKED
TO THE GOAL OF VICTORIA
ACHIEVING LITERACY AND
NUMERACY LEVELS ABOVE
THE AUSTRALIAN AVERAGE.



The changing nature of work requires a new approach

Low skills could see workers unable to keep up with a transitioning economy

Employment across Australia is shifting towards higher-skill jobs, with growth in the knowledge and service sectors.

Automation and technological change are already having – and will continue to have – a major impact on demand for low to medium-skill jobs across a range of occupations and industries (McKinsey Global Institute 2017). Some predictions suggest around 40% of jobs will be affected by automation in the next 15 years (CEDA 2015).

The widening gap between high and low-skill job opportunities will continue to increase risks for low-skill workers in the labour market and barriers to labour market entry for other disadvantaged learners.

Industry leaders are feeling the impacts of a low skill workforce

Literacy and numeracy skills provide the foundation for the development of the higher order skills increasingly necessary for a productive workforce (Productivity Commission 2014). Research by the Australian Industry Group found that more than three-quarters of employers said low literacy and numeracy levels among employees were affecting their business (AIG 2010).

In Australia, around 60% of adults with low-skill levels (including literacy and numeracy challenges) are already in the workforce (OECD 2017). More than one third of Victorians have qualifications below Certificate III level, and around half of these Victorians lack a Year 12 qualification or equivalent (see **Figure 2** below).

HIGHEST NON-SCHOOL QUALIFICATION	PERSONS	PROPORTION
Cert III+ (HE)	1,066,607	33%
Cert III+ (VET)	955,535	30%
No Cert III+ (total)	1,173,419	37%
No Cert III+ (have Year 12)	593,918	19%
No Cert III+ (no Year 12)	564,420	18%
Total Victorian working age population (including 'Not stated')	3,564,481	100%

Source: 2016 Census.

Figure 2: Working age Victorians (20–64), by highest non-school qualification.

Victorians with low educational attainment are more likely to be in low skill jobs

As shown by 2016 Census, Victorians with lower levels of education – such as Year 12, Year 11, or below – are more likely to be disengaged from the labour force, or employed in low skilled jobs (**Figure 3**).

Why does this issue need to be addressed now?

Without support to prepare for and manage these transitions, many Victorians will be left behind and lose the opportunity to attain or retain sustainable employment. The support these groups need includes literacy and numeracy training and foundational skills support. Workers facing transition also need assistance to understand their existing skill-sets and how they can be updated and applied in new contexts. Government has an important role to play, as research suggests that low skilled workers are the least likely to have access to training opportunities in their existing jobs and workplaces (Grotlüschen et al., 2016).

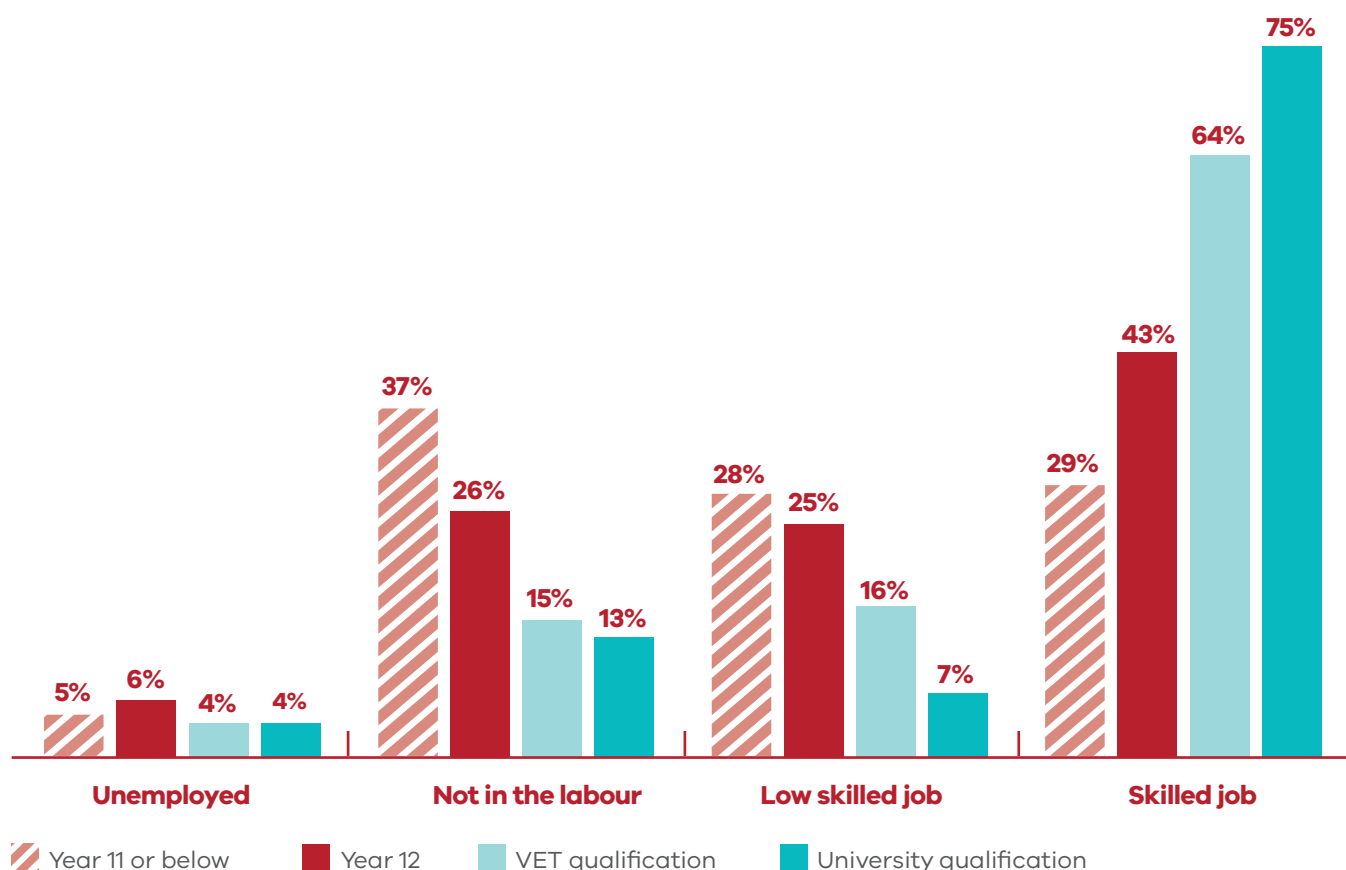


Figure 3: Current education achievement and employment in Victorians aged 20-64 (DET analysis of 2016 Census)

15 to 19 year olds not engaged in employment, education or training

Five percent of 15 to 19 year old Victorians are not studying or working

According to the 2016 Census, there were approximately **17,100** 15 to 19 year olds not engaged in employment, education or training (NEET) in Victoria, representing **5%** of all 15 to 19 year olds across the state.

These young people are predominantly located in outer metropolitan Melbourne LGAs and regional centres (such as Geelong and Bendigo). This indicates where a need for educational pathways to support social and economic inclusion may exist (**Figure 4**).

Education State initiatives such as Equity Funding, LOOKOUT Education Support Centres and the state-wide expansion of the Navigator program are working to reduce the number of early school leavers in Victoria. However, it is important that the adult education sector is equipped to respond to any young people who require a pathway back into education.

The challenge of entering the labour market without experience or qualifications

All young people face specific challenges associated with starting out in the labour market and limited work experience - challenges which will increase with the changing economy and labour market. Around one third of unemployed people in Australia are aged 15 to 24. This is partly due to increasing competition for the decreasing pool of 'entry level' or lower-skill jobs.

Commonwealth Department of Employment data shows that vacancies in the low-skill group of jobs have declined more than 50% since 2006 (Bowman and Azpitarte 2017). Young people face challenges relating to lack of work experience, lack of education and difficulties with access to transport (Bowman and Azpitarte 2017).

Characteristics of a 15 to 19 year old Victorian NEET

15 to 19 year olds who are not studying or working are often early school leavers with a poor prior experience of education. These young people may never have gained adequate literacy and numeracy skills to enter the labour market, and are over-represented in rates of non-vocational barriers such as mental health challenges, family instability and the impacts of family violence. Young people leaving school before completing a senior secondary certificate in Victoria are predominantly from the two lowest socio-economic status quartiles (59.9%) (Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2012).

The specific strategies that work for the most disengaged and disadvantaged young people are identified as including: an individualised approach that recognises diverse needs and circumstances; early establishment of trust and respect; holistic advice and guidance; individual action plans; ongoing support services for those who have personal and social difficulties; practical and experiential learning; involvement of family and community members; and ongoing assessment and monitoring of progress (OECD 2010).

WHAT DID WE HEAR IN CONSULTATION?

Working effectively with young NEETs is expensive

Many young people who have disengaged early from education have multiple and complex needs, such as challenges with mental health and housing insecurity.

Very few adult community education providers are funded directly for the one-on-one coaching and service coordination work required by this cohort.

As a result, an increasing number of LLOs are seeking to become independent schools to access a more robust and consistent funding source to provide better support for these young Victorians.

Why does this issue need to be addressed now?

Some groups of young people face significant adversity and challenges which are likely to impact their life trajectories. Early school leavers and young people engaged in neither education nor employment face are likely to face ongoing economic and social hardship through their lives.

Based on modelling of lifetime costs associated with early school leaving, the average lifetime fiscal cost to Australian governments or the taxpayer is \$334,600 for each early leaver (at the 2014 net present value). Across the 37,700 19 year olds in 2014 in Australia who were likely to remain lifetime early leavers, this fiscal cost amounts to \$12.6 billion (at the 2014 net present value) (Mitchell 2017).

Modelling conducted by the Mitchell Institute estimated that in 2014, 45,700 Australian 24 year olds (around 13%) would continue to remain disconnected from full-time work and study over most of their adult life. It suggests that the full lifetime fiscal burden to Australian governments amounts to around \$18.8 billion across the cohort as a whole.

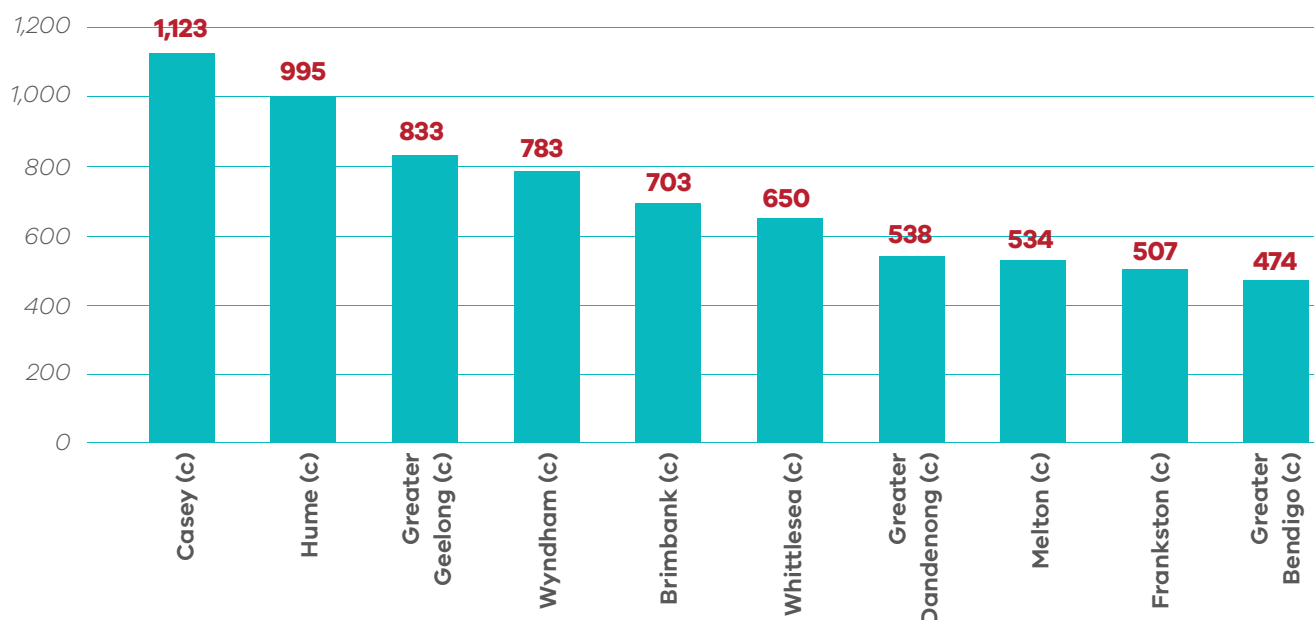


Figure 4: Ten largest LGAs in Victoria by number of 15 to 19 year old NEET (actuals) (2016 Census).

CHAPTER 2:

VICTORIA'S ADULT COMMUNITY EDUCATION SECTOR

IT PROVIDES VICTORIANS EXPERIENCING DISADVANTAGE, OR WITH LOW PRIOR EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, A SAFE SPACE TO ENGAGE IN TRANSITIONAL PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT OR MAINSTREAM EDUCATION WHICH WILL LEAD TO A DECENT JOB.

An essential and committed sector

The adult community education sector is an essential element of the Victorian education system. It provides Victorians experiencing disadvantage, or with low prior educational attainment, a safe space to engage in transitional pathways to employment or mainstream education which will lead to a decent job.

Providers of adult community education are commonly characterised by an unconditional acceptance of learners and a deep understanding of the needs of their local community.

As well as low literacy and numeracy, learners in adult community education may have low self-esteem, non-educational barriers to engagement such as mental health or displacement, and may have had a poor prior experience of education institutions.

It is these challenges that define the critical role of adult community education as a supported gateway back into learning, as well as developing learner skill sets, employability skills, self-esteem, life skills and social networks in a flexible but progression-oriented learning environment.

Who delivers adult community education?

Learn Local Organisations, TAFEs and Dual Sector Universities all offer elements of adult community education, which is defined for the purpose of this paper as pre-accredited training delivered by Learn Local Organisations and accredited foundation skills training delivered by Learn Local Organisations, TAFE Institutes and Dual Sector Universities.

Adult community education providers are often supported via partnerships with community support agencies, such as labour market programs and health services.

What are Learn Local Organisations?

Learn Local Organisations (LLOs) are independent and not-for-profit organisations that deliver education and training in community settings.

There are 300 LLOs across regional, rural and metropolitan Victoria delivering pre-accredited training. They are registered with the Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board that has a range of powers under the Education and Training Reform Act (2006). The ACFE Board is assisted by ACFE Regional Councils.

Around 65% of LLOs are Neighbourhood Houses, and around 30% are Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). LLOs are highly diverse but with an aligned sense of commitment to tailor education opportunities to meet the needs of local community members experiencing disadvantage.

LLOs exclusively deliver pre-accredited training, an education product designed to flexibly meet the needs of Victorians experiencing disadvantage.

Pre-accredited training

The primary purpose of pre-accredited education and training is to provide opportunities that engage and initiate vocational pathways for the most educationally disadvantaged learners. Pre-accredited courses, delivered by LLOs and Adult Education Institutions, address the needs of adults who have experienced barriers to education in the past and find it difficult to undertake accredited courses as their first step into vocational training.

In 2016, 24,600 learners participated in a total of 2.1 million pre-accredited training hours across 252 providers. On average, learners participated in 80 hours of pre-accredited training per year. Some students participated in more than one pre-accredited course with 44,600 total enrolments across the state.

By program type, the most common pre-accredited learner enrolments were in employment skills (46%), followed by adult literacy & numeracy skills 34% (**Figure 5**).

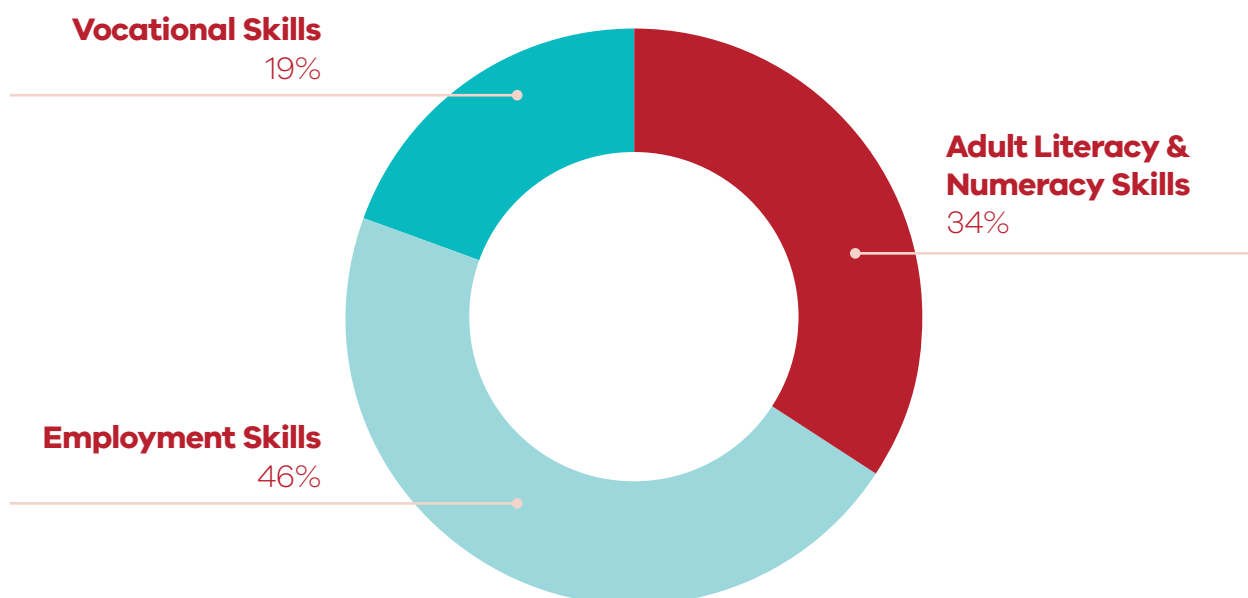


Figure 5: Pre-accredited learner enrolment by course type (Vic DET activity data).

Pre-accredited outcomes

Pre-accredited learners who transition to accredited training are much more likely to attain their qualifications, compared to the average Victorian VET student. Of the 29% of pre-accredited learners who transition into accredited training, 64% directly attain a qualification with a further 14% indirectly attaining a qualification. In comparison, the average Victorian VET completion rate is 47.3%. This result is striking given that 90% of pre-accredited learners are experiencing multiple instances of disadvantage.

Foundation skills training

Foundation skills training aims to ensure that students enrolling in vocational education and training (VET) are equipped with the skills and abilities required to successfully complete a vocational qualification and meet workforce requirements.

Foundation skills training is accredited, but tailored to the individual needs of the learner based on an evaluation of their current capabilities. Foundation skills courses include the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA), Certificate of English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Certificate in Skills for Vocational Pathways (FSK).

Foundation skills training can be delivered as a stand-alone program prior to commencing a vocational qualification, concurrently with a vocational qualification in a parallel learning approach, or integrated in vocational qualification training.

53,700 students were enrolled in 65,500 foundation Skills courses in Victoria in 2017. Of these, around 32,000 (49%) enrolments related to learners who were not in school or employed/ seeking employment, and 56% of those were aged 25 to 49 (**Figure 6**).

Across the three main domains for foundation skills enrolments in 2017, the most common was English as an Additional Language (EAL) and related courses (44%), followed by disability-specific courses (34%) and general education, vocational pathways, and literacy and numeracy courses 22% (**Figure 7**).

Half of all 2017 government-funded foundation skills enrolments were with TAFE providers, 31% were with Learn Local Organisations providers, and the remaining enrolments were with dual sector (10%) and private providers 9% (**Figure 8**).

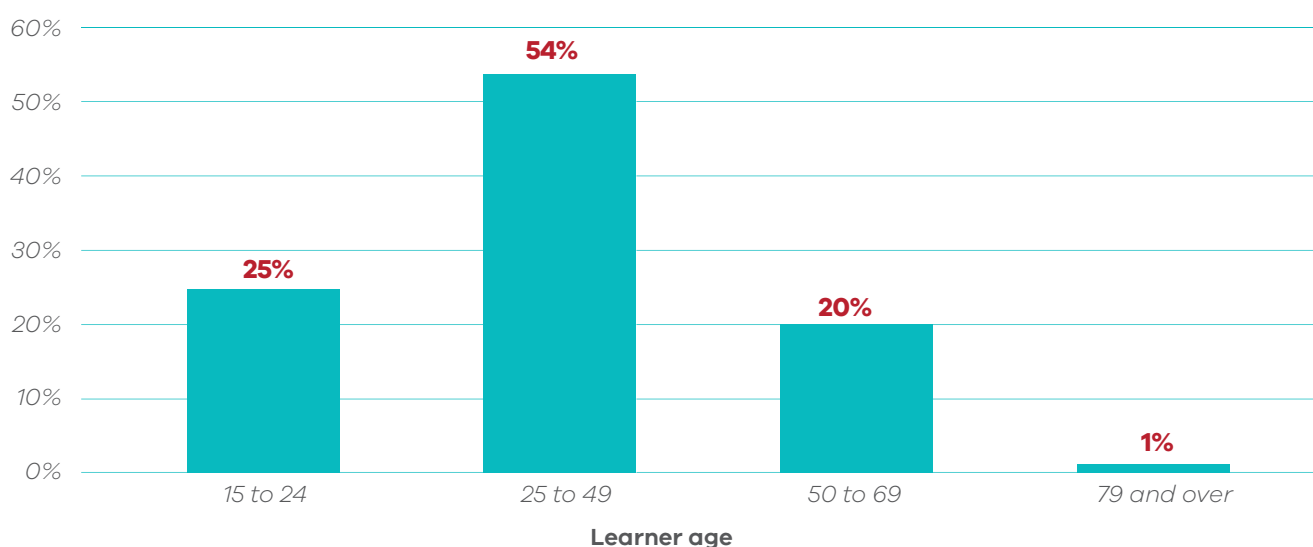


Figure 6: Foundation skills learner enrolment by age (Vic DET Foundation Skills data, 2017).

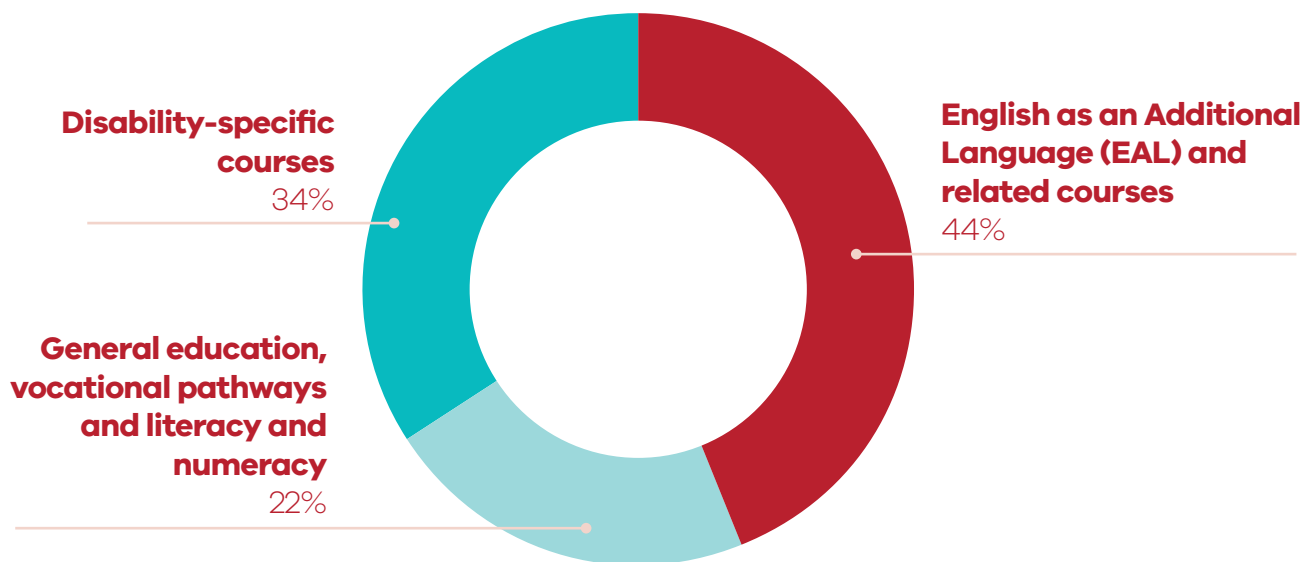


Figure 7: Foundation skills learner enrolment by course type (Vic DET Foundation Skills data, 2017).

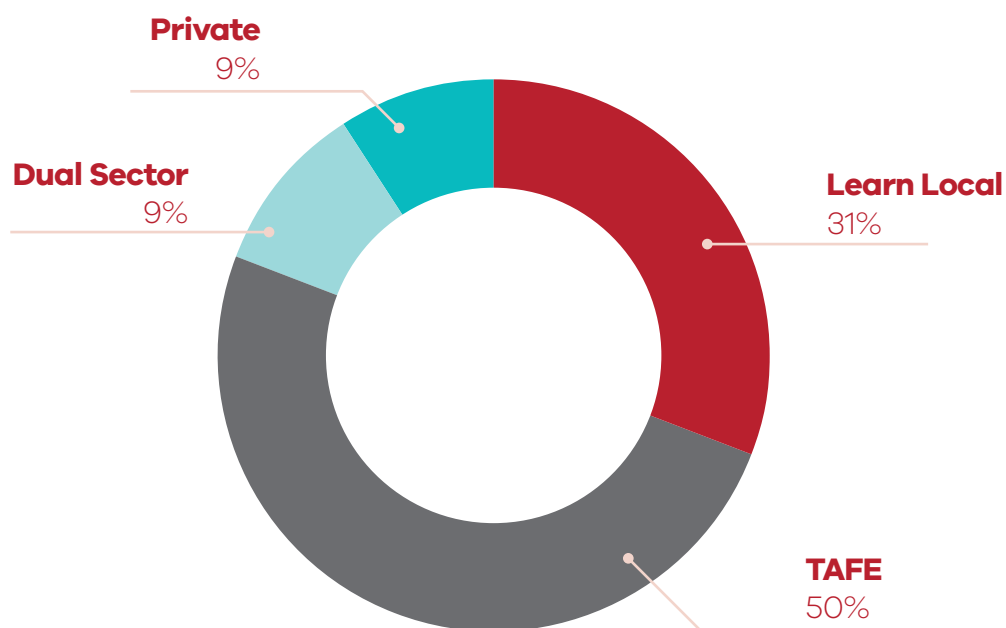


Figure 8: Foundation skills learner enrolment by provider type (Vic DET Foundation Skills data, 2017).

Foundation skills outcomes

Foundation skills completion rates are universally low, but are particularly low for foundation skills learners who have limited literacy and numeracy, and those who are not in the labour force.

How is the adult community education system responding to Victorians at the lowest levels of literacy?

Pre-accredited

People with low literacy and numeracy (defined for pre-accredited training as having completed less than Year 12, less than Certificate III and not at school) in pre-accredited training were more likely to enrol in employment skills (47%) than adult literacy and numeracy skills 36% (**Figure 9**).

Foundation skills

People with low literacy and numeracy (defined for foundation skills as having a highest prior education of below year 12 or equivalent) represented 50% of 65,500 foundation skills enrolments in 2017. Around half of this cohort was enrolled in EAL and related courses (**Figure 10**).

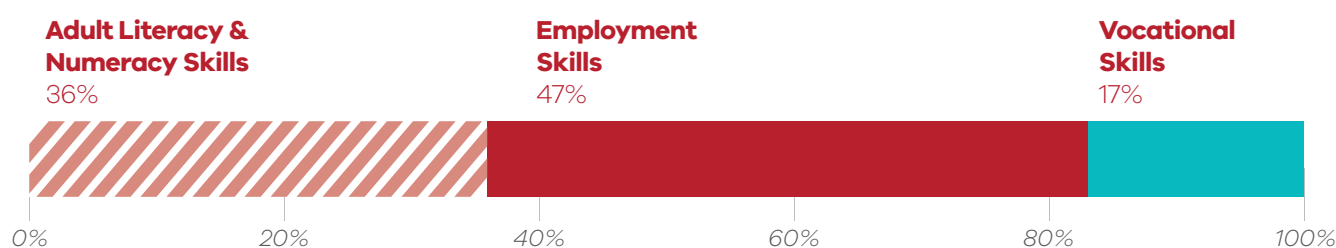


Figure 9: Low literacy and numeracy enrolment in pre-accredited training by program type (Vic DET activity data).

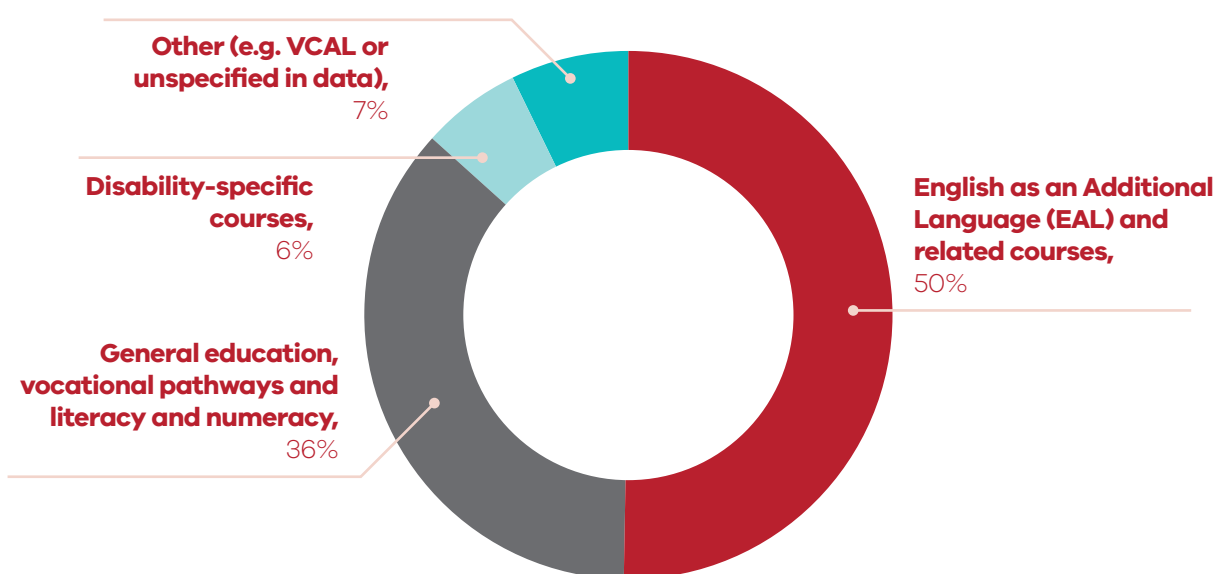


Figure 10: Low literacy & numeracy cohort enrolment in foundation skills by course type (Vic DET Foundation Skills data, 2017).

How is the adult community education system responding to Victorians with low educational attainment in low skill jobs?

Pre-accredited training

600 ‘workers at risk’ participated in pre-accredited training from 2013 to 2015. This cohort was equally likely to be enrolled in employment skills and adult literacy and numeracy skills courses (41% and 40% of enrolments, respectively; **Figure 11**). This represents a low percentage of the total pre-accredited cohort, but shows strong engagement in key areas.

Foundation skills training

Foundation skills completion rates are highest for those that are full-time employed (43%) and part-time employed 33% (**Figure 12**).

Foundation skills students in full time or part time employment each represent 5% respectively of all foundation skills enrolments (2017) (**Figure 13**). This is noteworthy, as this data shows there are stronger outcomes for learners who are currently employed, but engagement of these cohorts is proving challenging.

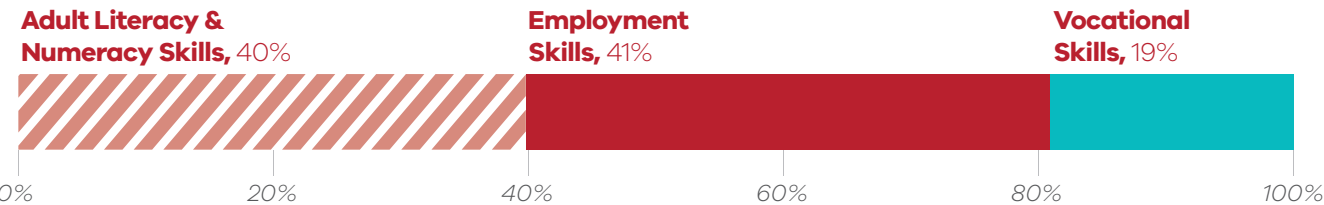


Figure 11: At-risk worker enrolment in pre-accredited training by program type (Vic DET activity data).

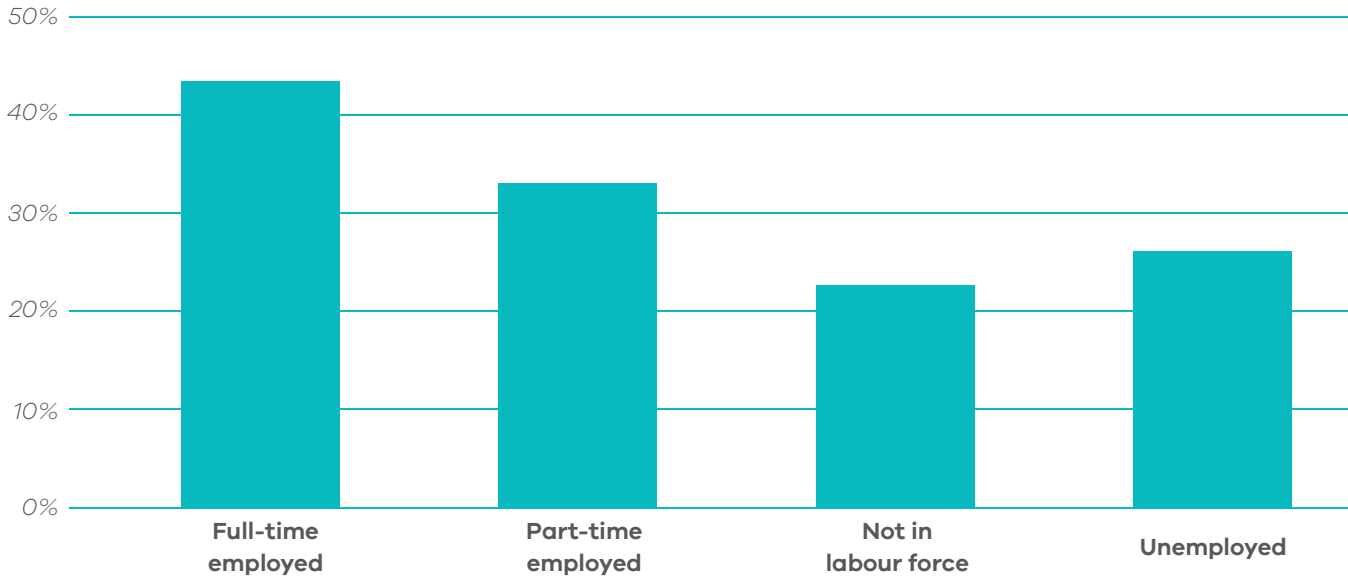


Figure 12: Foundation skills completion rates by employment status (Vic DET Foundation Skills data, 2017).

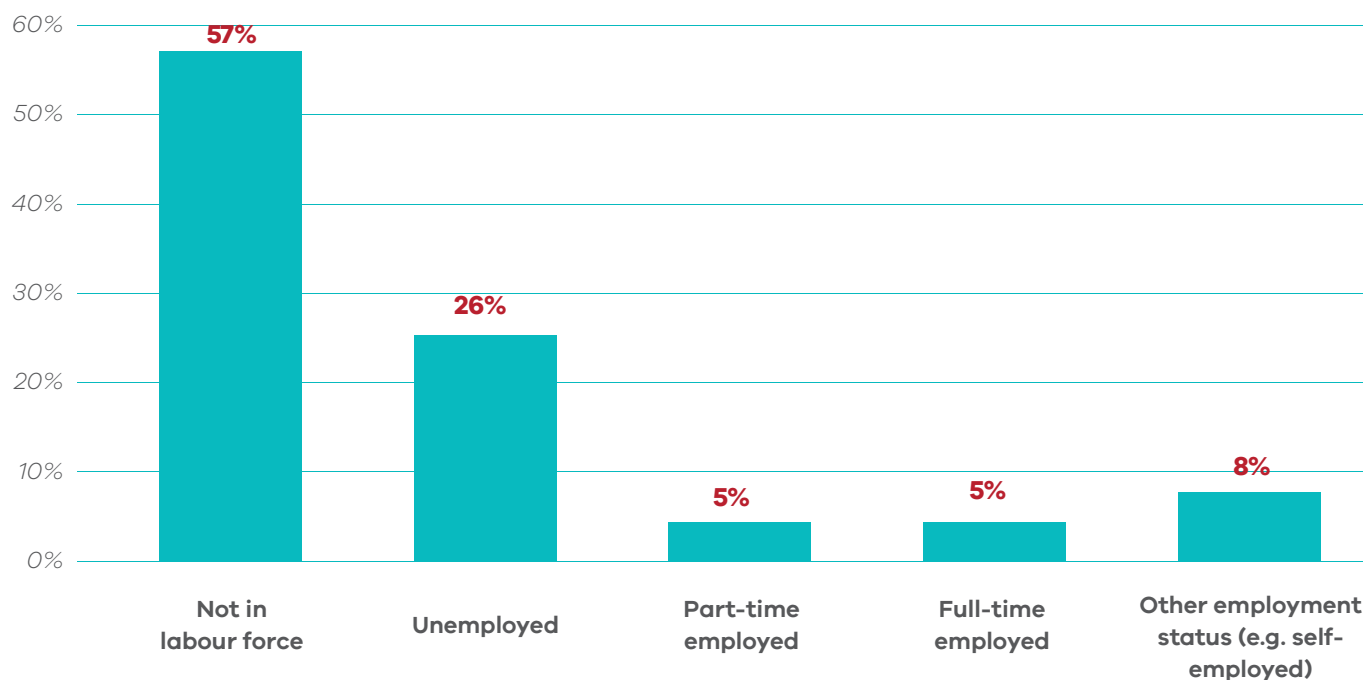


Figure 13: *Employment status across learners in general education, vocational pathways, literacy and courses (Vic DET Foundation Skills data, 2017).*



How is the adult community education system responding to 15 – 19 year old NEETs?

Pre-accredited training

For the 15-19 year old NEET cohort in pre-accredited training, almost half of the 1,600 enrolments (2013 – 15) were in employment skills (Figure 14), and 30% in adult literacy and numeracy skills.

Foundation skills training

In 2017, the 15-19 year old NEET cohort represented 4% of all foundation skills enrolments, or less than 2,900 of enrolments.

For this cohort, around a third were enrolled in general education, vocational pathways, and literacy & numeracy (33%). Nearly a quarter were enrolled in EAL and related courses 24% (Figure 15).

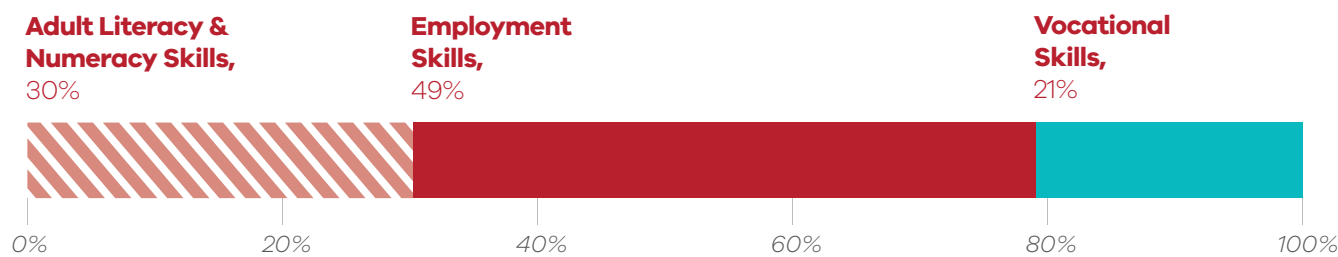


Figure 14: 15-19 year old NEET cohort enrolment in pre-accredited training by program type (Vic DET activity data).

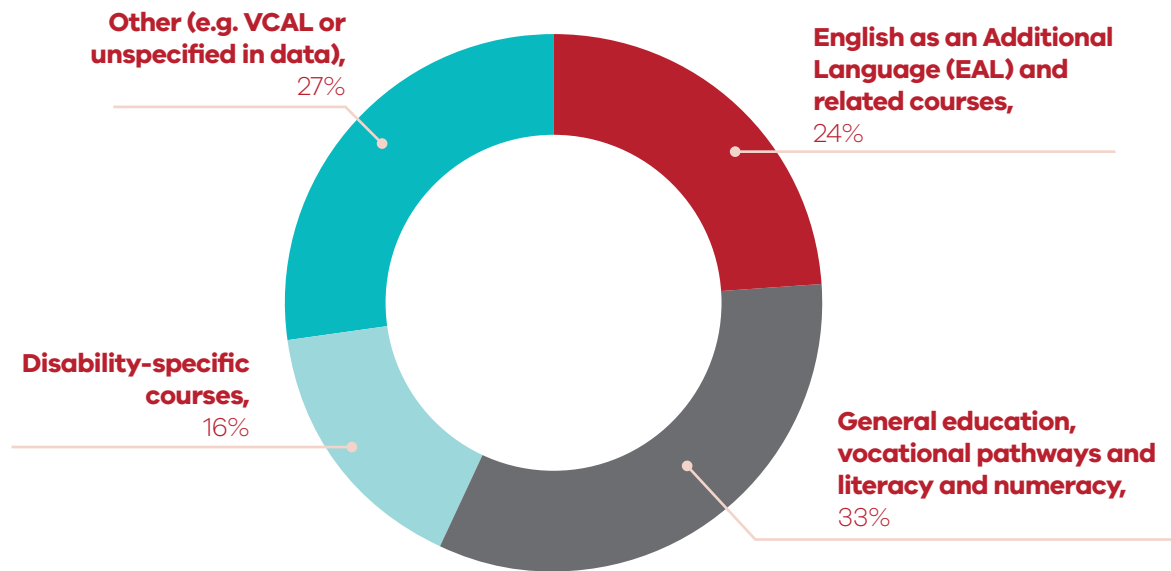


Figure 15: 15-19 year old NEET cohort enrolment in foundation skills by course type (Vic DET Foundation Skills data, 2017).

CHAPTER 3:

THEMES, OPTIONS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This chapter describes the three major themes identified in the FOAL project's consultation, literature review and data analysis. It also presents, for each of the three themes, relevant case studies and other evidence, along with potential reform options and questions to guide consultation on this Discussion Paper. The themes, analysis, options and questions align to the FOAL project scope.

The potential reform options represent a range of interventions that reflect both the potential for immediate change to improve outcomes for the FOAL target cohorts, and the opportunity to test new ways of working to move towards an enhanced adult community education model. The options are designed to span across all levels of the adult community education, from enhancing teaching and provision through to embedding system-level and place-based best practice.

The Department of Education and Training invites responses to the Discussion Questions in Chapter 3 of this Discussion Paper, by written submission no later than **24 August 2018**.

Please email your submission to
Future.Adult.Learners@edumail.vic.gov.au

Theme 1: Ensuring the adult community education sector has sufficient scale and capability to meet the needs of learners, including those who are at risk and/or have high needs

Introduction

Theme 1 considers the system settings and capabilities required to build the scale and enhance the impact of adult community education on at-risk Victorians. Of particular focus is the specialised practitioner expertise required to deliver to learners with the lowest levels of literacy, and systemic barriers which may inadvertently delay learner progress and inclusion.

Performance and scale of adult community education

As detailed in Chapter 2, there are some strong outcomes occurring for at-risk learners who participate in adult community education – most notably those who transition from pre-accredited training into accredited training.

However, it should be considered whether a higher percentage of pre-accredited learners should be transitioning into accredited training, and whether the foundation skills completion rate could be improved.

Literacy is a rising challenge across the VET system

There is a growing demand for foundation skills courses, and adult community education providers face an increasing challenge to support learners with very low literacy (Adult Learning Australia 2017).

Improving literacy and numeracy is not a challenge for the adult and community education sector to address alone. In 2015, a widespread review of the Victorian VET system was conducted. One key finding was that 'overcoming foundation skills deficits is the single most significant contribution that can be made to assist students to be successful' (Mackenzie and Coulson 2015). Further, the review argued that overcoming literacy and numeracy deficits was essential for helping all learners to successfully complete training and gain employment and central to VET's role in addressing disadvantage.

Targeted policy actions to improve literacy and numeracy are being developed and implemented across all aspects of the education system. The potential actions in this Discussion Paper are focused on the adult and community education system, while noting that actions should be implemented in a coordinated and complementary way across the whole education system.

WHAT DID WE HEAR IN CONSULTATION?

There is a range of pre-accredited teaching experience and capability across the sector

There is a mixed staffing composition in adult community education. Language, literacy and numeracy practitioners, vocational and other adult educators, community support workers, careers counsellors and many others have a role in supporting the skill development needs of individuals enrolled in adult community education programs. There is also a rich and dynamic volunteer workforce providing teaching support in Learn Local Organisations. Meeting the needs of the diverse group of learners in Learn Locals requires a collaborative effort.

Formal workforce capability data (NCVER) tells us that teachers of pre-accredited courses have a mix of experience and qualifications and many have vital community experience and a strong passion for the role.

Some core capabilities for teaching in adult community education include individualising instruction, engaging vulnerable learners and catering for multiple ability levels in one classroom. We know from the research that evidence based approaches to instruction, formal and informal assessment methods and the use of digital technologies are emerging needs in adult education.

Developing a consistent pre-accredited teaching standard which encompasses the specialist needs of learners at the lowest levels of literacy is a challenge across the sector.

Practitioners require specialised knowledge and skills to teach adult learners at the lowest levels of literacy

Learners at the lowest levels of literacy and numeracy require models of teaching and curriculum, facilitated by literacy and numeracy practitioners with established skills and experience, to ensure effective progress. These practitioners are versed in adult education principles and are able to customise the content of a course to meet the particular needs of their students. The strongest examples of these models factor in the industry-specific literacy and numeracy abilities learners need to thrive in the modern workplace.

While pre-accredited educators across Victoria have a broad diversity of qualifications and levels of experience, there is currently no formal qualification requirement to teach pre-accredited training. This may impact on the consistency of pre-accredited literacy course delivery, and the capacity of the adult community education sector to respond to emerging needs.

In relation to the support of practitioner capability, there are strong existing examples of highly designed, specific and prescriptive literacy and numeracy programs in Australia, such as 26Ten in Tasmania, which could provide a blueprint for a Victorian response. Bodies such as the Victorian Adult Literacy Basic Education Council, a not for profit, volunteer-managed, professional organisation that has represented the adult literacy, numeracy and basic education fields in Victoria for 40 years, support the professional development of practitioners to develop and extend their capacity to deliver to diverse learner groups.

WHAT DID WE HEAR IN CONSULTATION?

Teaching literacy within vocational contexts requires resources and tools

Equipping adults with functional literacy skills requires intensive teaching, and courses designed in a context that will be engaging and non-threatening:

- *'Adults are not going to tell you that they cannot read or write and will be very reluctant to attend a literacy class.'*
- *'Call the adult literacy class something (skill-focussed) and deliver literacy or numeracy in context'*

Customisation of approaches is resource heavy and time consuming. Adult community education providers noted that access to best-practice literacy and numeracy resources urgently needs to be facilitated. Many providers are creating their own resources, which may not provide the best evidence-based response.

Assessing learner needs and measuring progress

A broad suite of language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) needs assessment and career assessment tools are used in TAFE and Learn Local settings across Victoria. Current tools in use can be resource-heavy to administer, overly complex, and can have the unintended consequence of impacting the confidence of learners with low literacy and numeracy capabilities.

This issue is not unique to Victoria. For example, South Australia has moved to streamline language, literacy and numeracy assessments across the VET system to ensure consistency in targeting course options to learner capacity.

Research suggests that any such instrument should include measures such as changes in attitudes to learning, self-confidence, social capital and engagement with others. Ideally, these instruments would be used by learners and tutors together to assess the learner's progress over time in a positive, easy-to-understand way (Dymock 2007).

WHAT DID WE HEAR IN CONSULTATION?

Measuring learner progress

The establishment of a simple framework for assessing needs and understanding progress, connecting back to the characteristics of learners and their intentions for their engagement in adult community education, would be of significant benefit to the adult community education sector. Such a framework could inform targeting of training interventions at an appropriate level and provide ongoing assessment of learner goals, pathways and career profile.

'Governance and accountability can be challenging for informal, flexible and locally based programs. Areas for improvement include a simple framework for monitoring outcomes and identifying gain; and course approval processes that allow for agile decision making at the front line.'



Momentum is critical to learner success

For learners at the lowest levels of literacy, an intentional and consistent education plan is required to ensure skills are incrementally built and contextualised.

However, we heard that some accredited training criteria may inadvertently limit pathway opportunities for at-risk learners undertaking foundation skills training.

For example, one of the determinations of the ability of a student to receive government-subsidised training is the 'two course rule', which restricts students to:

- Commencing a maximum of two government-funded courses in a calendar year;
- Undertaking a maximum of two government-funded courses at any one time; and
- Commencing a maximum of two government-funded courses at the same level in their lifetime.

These VET system settings were introduced as a first step in ensuring VET providers offer education pathways tailored to student's abilities, interests and existing skill sets. However, under Skills First pre-training requirements, there is now a robust and sophisticated assessment of individual needs to ensure providers engage in more nuanced responses to student needs.

WHAT DID WE HEAR IN CONSULTATION?

Learners at the lowest levels of literacy thrive on momentum

Learners with low literacy require a long and sophisticated pathway to develop adequate LLN skills to engage in employment in the modern economy. This may include completion of several pre-accredited and foundation skill courses before being equipped to successfully transition into a vocational course.

To retain momentum, these learners need to upskill via sequential pathways with short transitions between courses. However, some system settings may limit options to keep learners at the lowest levels of literacy consistently engaged.

For example, CGEA with additional LLN support (each of which count as government-funded course commencements in a year) only run for 490 hours, and then the learner is not eligible to commence another Certificate until the following year.

Working with high needs learners is resource-intensive

Some of the most vulnerable Victorians have multiple and complex challenges that affect their ability to engage in a consistent learning pathway. The challenges include issues with mental health and insecure housing.

In consultations, we heard that Learn Locals work to provide additional supports to these learners, such as smaller class sizes, one-on-one coaching and coordination of additional non-vocational supports.

The 2015, the VET Funding Review recognised the additional requirements of high-needs learners, recommending a pool of funding to improve access and transition of learners with additional or intensive support needs. In response, the Reconnect program has been established for RTOs and TAFE Institutes to provide bespoke responses to learner needs, and will be included in the evaluation of Skills First.

Although a regional loading is applied to support regional provision, the current 'flat' funding model for pre-accredited training does not distinguish between the different levels of engagement required by high-needs learners.

WHAT DID WE HEAR IN CONSULTATION?

The challenge of working with high-needs learners

A consistent theme throughout consultations was the highly challenging nature of catering for the skill needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. A parallel theme was the lack of general understanding and recognition of adult community education's contribution to successful outcomes for many of these adults and how this is funded.

Consultations consistently pointed to the 'flexibility' challenges of meeting learner needs while complying with program rules. This is particularly evident when adult community education providers are needing to cross subsidise programs to meet learner needs, particularly in coordinating provision of the wrap-around services to sustain the learner's engagement in education.

There is a consistent message from managers.

- *'The ACE sector is funded for delivery not engagement; and yet engagement is where we have a unique role'*
- *'Engagement with students and community is critical but ACE providers are only funded for delivery. Delivery alone is not enough to support and sustain learner engagement.'*
- *'The funding for pre-accredited hourly rates may be a disincentive for LLOs to take on the "hardest" individuals'*

Partnerships with community services delivering non-vocational supports

Relationships with non-vocational community service providers, such as mental health support and housing services, are critical pillars of support for high needs learners engaging in adult community education.

Relationships with culturally-specific agencies, such as Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, can also assist providers to develop culturally appropriate responses to learner needs.

WHAT DID WE HEAR IN CONSULTATION?

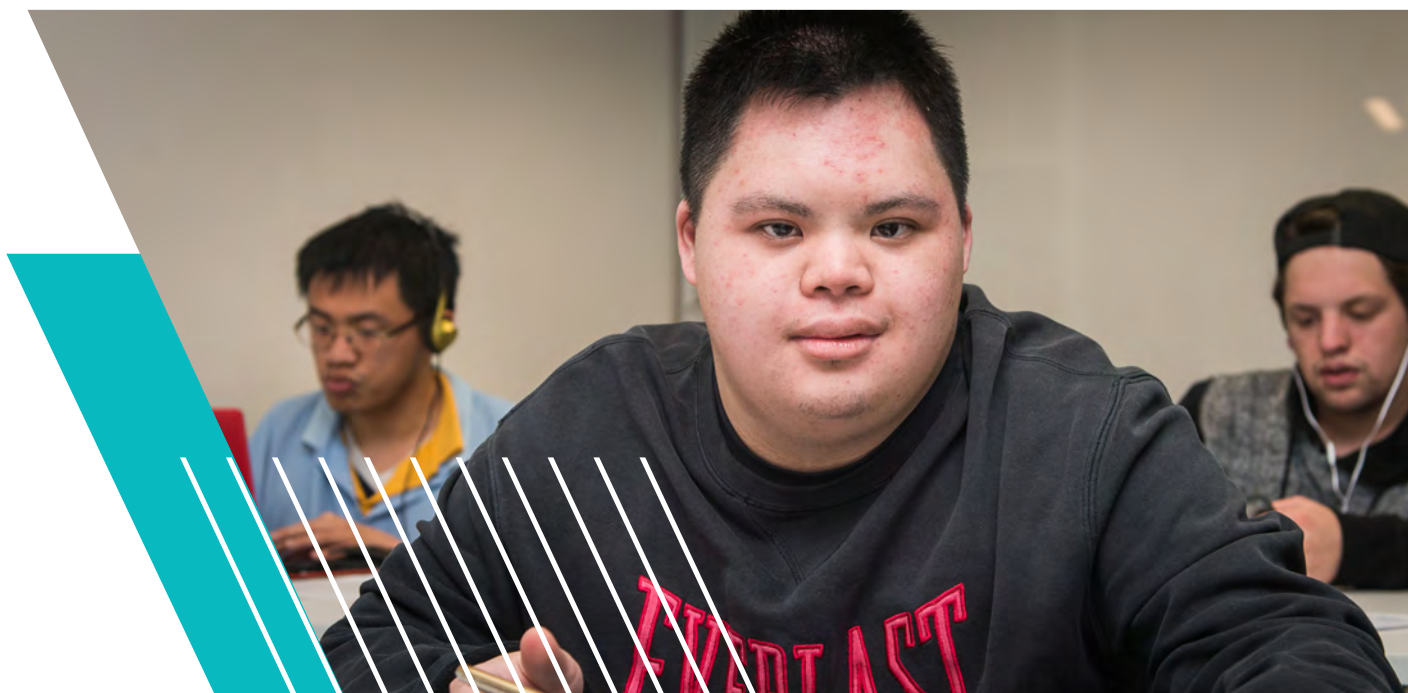
The importance of partnering with community service providers

Adult community education providers need deep ongoing partnerships with local community institutions to adequately respond to the increasing number of people with non-vocational barriers, such as mental health challenges, seeking education pathways.

Examples were provided of Learn Local Organisations who did not have these partnerships so were unable to meet the demand for wrap-around support for high needs learners.

Providers spoke of the importance of these relationships:

- *'Relationship building (with other community service providers) from the outset is key to holding the disengaged in learning'*



Options and Discussion Questions for Theme 1

A targeted response to learner needs

Adult community education interventions should be aligned to learners' skills and requirements. The FOAL project is seeking input from stakeholders on how best to target adult and community education services to learners' needs.

Freely available and high-quality Learner Capability Assessment Kits are one option for consideration. Incorporating diagnostic language, literacy and numeracy assessment, the kits could set consistent targeting of training pathways appropriate to literacy level and provide a benchmark measure of learner progress.

In addition, a high-quality career profiling tool aligned to labour market demand could assist learners to understand where their skills and attributes fit in the world of work, and other tools, such as the Outcomes Star, to measure learner progress across a wide range of life domains.

Discussion Questions

- **What best practice assessment tools are currently in use across the adult community education sector?**
- **If Learner Capability Assessment Kits were freely available to Learn Local Organisations and TAFE Institutes, how consistently would they be used?**
- **What other measures of progress could be employed to better understand learner development within pre-accredited training?**

Assisting high-needs learners to engage in adult community education

Some of the most vulnerable Victorians have multiple and complex challenges that affect their ability to follow a consistent learning pathway. The current 'flat' funding model for pre-accredited training does not distinguish the different levels of engagement required by high-needs learners. The FOAL project is seeking input from stakeholders on how best to provide adult and community education services to high-needs learners.

A wide range of options exist, including wrap-around services and one-on-one coaching. A complementary per hour pre-accredited training amount for learners assessed as 'high needs' could assist LLOs to provide the robust support required by these learners.

Discussion Questions

- **How should 'high-needs' be defined, and what learner characteristics would define a learner as high-needs?**
- **What approaches would best support high-needs learners to participate in pre-accredited training?**
- **How can the transition of high-needs learners from adult community education into mainstream education be better supported?**



Building excellence in the adult community education teaching workforce

Building specialist capability and consistency in the adult community education teaching workforce is critical to address the needs of learners at the lowest levels of literacy across Victoria. The FOAL project is seeking input from stakeholders on how best to build excellence in the adult community education workforce.

Establishing an Adult Literacy and Basic Education Research and Professional Development Centre is one option to support the adult community education workforce across Victoria. Such a Centre could help ensure consistent availability of high quality adult community education, and be tasked with undertaking research, facilitating evidence-based educator development, and providing access to high quality teaching and learning materials.

Of critical importance would be the development of literacy and numeracy resources specific to the needs of industry.

Furthermore, the adoption of an agreed mechanism for describing and benchmarking practitioner's skills and expertise could establish a baseline level for pre-accredited teaching skills and competencies, and allow for transportability of skills between organisations. Such benchmarking could also increase the visibility and credibility of pre-accredited training across the Victorian education sector.

Discussion Questions

- **Are there other ways to invest in the literacy and numeracy teaching capabilities of the adult community education workforce?**
- **What approach could be taken to achieve a minimum teaching standard?**
- **How can the andragogical approach of adult community providers to literacy and numeracy be enhanced?**

Identifying systemic barriers to learner progress

Some system settings, introduced to enhance the performance of the Victorian VET system, may inadvertently affect the efficient progress of people along learning pathways. The FOAL project is seeking input from stakeholders on how best to address barriers to learners' progress.

For example, an option could be to make amendments to the 'two course rule' for foundation skills students to ensure learners at the lowest levels of literacy can access the supports they need to build momentum towards a vocational qualification.

Removing the limit of two government-funded commencements in a year for learners undertaking foundation skills could potentially strengthen pathways to further training and employment for at-risk learners.

Discussion Questions

- **Do the current system settings meet the needs of at-risk learners?**
- **Are the foundation skills courses sufficient to meet the needs of learners at the lowest levels of literacy?**

Theme 2: Ensuring the adult community education system is strongly oriented towards jobs and industry

Introduction

Theme 2 considers opportunities to build the adult community education sector's capacity to engage with industry, and deliver courses aligned to growth sector skill requirements. There is also consideration of adult community education models of delivery in the workplace to equip workers with literacy and numeracy skills to meet the changing needs of industry, and improve opportunities for participation and inclusion.

Adults require the agency to make decisions about their skill needs, but they can only do so if they have developed the notion of themselves as a learner and the capacity to recognise both strengths and weaknesses. Those seeking employment for the first time or seeking to change jobs either because of choice or retrenchment need to recognise the skills and knowledge they have developed in their lives and how they might transfer these to a new job. Skills transfer is not automatic. Learners require support to do this.

Industry transition has a disproportionate impact on workers with low educational attainment

While job displacement can affect anyone, people with low education or skills levels are more at risk of job loss. People with low education or skills are also more likely to experience difficulties gaining employment and a lower income following their job loss, leaving them vulnerable to poor employment outcomes, particularly those that have spent most of their working life in an industry/occupation which is disappearing or significantly contracting.

While workers with low educational attainment may require initial intensive literacy and numeracy development, they will also need contemporary vocational skills. This highlights the importance and relevance of an adult community education sector that is locally accessible, responsive to transitioning worker needs and aligned to the skills sought by industry.



Aligning adult community education to industry need also supports the needs of learners and the Government's social and economic goals

Providing support and access to education and social participation is a key ingredient of economic growth and productivity. With employment growth a continued focus of the Victorian Government, it is critical that all Victorians have the opportunity to develop the literacy, numeracy, vocational and employability skills required to secure these jobs, regardless of background or socio-economic status.

The Victorian education system is also undergoing significant change. The *Education State* and Skills First reforms are designed to ensure Victoria has a high-quality education system, with schools and VET providers responding to the needs of students and the evolving skill requirements of 21st century industry.

These changes provide an important opportunity to ensure that Victoria's education system is best placed to meet the specific needs of community members who are not currently engaged in the education system, with a particular focus on those at highest risk of disengagement, social isolation and unemployment.

WHAT DID WE HEAR IN CONSULTATION?

Adult community education responding to local labour market need

Being responsive to local labour market need and local vocational training opportunities can be a significant challenge for adult community education providers. Offerings typically reflect local employment opportunities (e.g. horticulture, retail skills). Offerings can also be client specific (e.g. unemployed people in public housing, retrenched workers with literacy and numeracy needs).

Success often depends not only on the learners' engagement but also on the strength of the links between providers, employers and other service agencies and their understanding of the benefits pre-accredited training in particular can offer learners.

Managers commented on their most effective courses.

- *'We believe in the value of work placements and work very hard with partners to build in that component'*
- *'Short, bite-sized offerings (micro-courses) are working well for industry and lay the foundation for further engagement'*
- *'Industry engagement takes time and expertise, and requires backfill resourcing'*

Meeting the needs of industry with pre-accredited training

Development of strong and industry-contextualised skills in pre-accredited training as a pathway to further study and work can assist 'at risk' learners to commence and complete vocational courses in TAFE.

While there are some strong current examples of pre-accredited training tailored to the specific needs of industry, providers raised the challenges of allocating resources to industry engagement and curriculum design.

WHAT DID WE HEAR IN CONSULTATION?

LLOs preparing learners for industry-specific vocational courses

LLOs could provide a critical support to at-risk learners by preparing them to successfully commence and complete an industry-specific accredited course in a mainstream education environment, such as a TAFE, which in turn is linked to industry needs.

'Learn Locals and other community providers are an appropriate learning environment for high-need learners with significant LLN requirements. These providers also have access to funding and are experienced in the delivery of pre-accredited training. As part of a partnership arrangement, it would be beneficial if TAFEs/dual sectors could refer high-need learners requiring significant LLN support to such a provider to develop their skills in a different environment. These learners could return to their TAFE program of choice once they have achieved LLN at the appropriate level. Currently, the administrative systems and processes of local providers and TAFEs make such transitions difficult.'

Literacy, numeracy and foundation skills delivered in the workplace

A number of adult community education providers are engaged with other agencies in teaching literacy in workplaces and this is highly valued by industry managers and employees. Functional literacy in workplaces is becoming essential as technological changes accelerate. Employees who cannot manage information will not be equipped to thrive in transitioning sectors.

This perspective has been reinforced by employers who require increasing, industry-specific literacy and numeracy skill levels of staff to remain competitive in the modern market.

"Literacy and numeracy shortfalls have emerged as a major issue for employers as they evaluate their skills base against opportunities presented by the improving economy... more than 75% of employers responding to our survey reported that their businesses were affected by low levels of literacy and numeracy."

**Heather Ridout, former Chief Executive,
Australian Industry Group, 2012**

We heard that well regarded workplace delivery programs tackle literacy in small sequential chunks. Trainers are embedded in the workplace, and tailor training around the specific work and associated literacy needs of that firm – such as signs, instructions, record keeping, and handling documentation.

Industry stakeholders see strong potential in developing widespread high quality on-site literacy training - and that LLOs are ideally placed for delivery.

Micro-credentials: helping industry to understand pre-accredited training

A sense of progress and achievement is an important factor in building the confidence of at-risk learners to engage in further education pathways.

Micro-credentials are currently being used by some adult community education providers to codify the attainment of specific, tangible and industry-related skills. These small 'bite-sized' units offering clearly defined skills and competencies could help learners build momentum towards further education and employment. They form 'tiered' systems of achievement which can boost learner satisfaction and confidence.

Micro-credentials can also assist learners to promote their relevant skills to employers via resume's and in job interviews.

CASE STUDY: RMIT micro-credentials

Launched in early 2015, Future Edge is a university-wide co-curricular program that enhances students' employability skills and helps showcase themselves and their skills to employers, optimising graduate employment outcomes.

In 2017 RMIT's Careers and Employability team introduced micro-credentials to the Future Edge program, developing a framework to deliver 21st century skill development across the university through industry endorsed and co-created micro-credentials.

The micro-credentials created were broad, such as "machine learning," or specific, like "using data to differentiate instruction for ELL students." For example, RMIT offers an "iOS App Development" short course in partnership with Apple.

Partnering with Future Edge gave the Careers and Employability team a head start on the use of the credentials and the ability to solve an immediate need to respond to the demand from students for skill building and evidencing these skills in the co-curricular space.

The credentials give students access to external facing badges that can be showcased on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook to demonstrate the skills they have developed.

Over 300 students earned a badge across the three Leadership credentials from March–October 2017. The badges are predominantly being showcased on LinkedIn. Further work is continuing to enable students to use the badges to build their profiles with employers. Students also receive recognition on their transcript for the micro-credential.

Options and Discussion Questions for Theme 2

Improving the responsiveness of adult community education to educational priorities and industry needs

The FOAL project is seeking input from stakeholders on how best to align pre-accredited and foundation skills training with the needs of industry.

Under one option, custom-designed pre-accredited and foundation skills courses, initially aligned to courses supporting government priority industries and linked to real industry skills, could be made available to Learn Local providers across Victoria.

These courses could be co-designed with industry leaders, and could include hands-on learning, work tasters and group-based work experience. This could enhance the 'real world' authenticity of the curriculum, with learners able to see the links between pre-accredited courses, labour market opportunities and their personal career goals.

These courses could also be customised for delivery in the workplace to effectively target workers who may need to upskill or prepare to transition into a new industry.

Another option could introduce a series of industry co-designed pre-accredited micro-credentials which would build the status of pre-accredited training for employers and offer tangible achievements and progress measures for learners.

These small offerings, delivering clearly defined skills and competencies, could also help learners build momentum towards further education and employment and form a 'tiered' system of pre-accredited training from initial engagement to industry-specific courses and micro-credentials.

Discussion Questions

- **What would be required to tailor pre-accredited and foundation skills training to a specific industry context?**
- **Would developing pre-accredited micro-credentials result in greater employer understanding of learner achievements in pre-accredited training?**
- **Would insurance coverage for pre-accredited work experience assist learners to develop transferrable industry skills?**

Addressing the needs of workers with low literacy

A number of workers in low skills jobs with low educational attainment could benefit from contextualised LLN training. The FOAL project is seeking input from stakeholders on the best model to deliver LLN training to at risk workers.

The delivery of tailored LLN training in the workplace could assist employers to enhance productivity, and equip at risk workers to meet the demands of the new economy.

A dedicated pre-accredited training pool for delivering LLN training in the workplace, factoring in the need for robust industry engagement, could provide a new market for Learn Local organisations.

Discussion Questions

- **What is the best mechanism for adult community education providers to engage with industry on the development of industry-specific literacy and numeracy solutions?**
- **What would make adult community education delivery in the workplace an appealing option for industry to support?**
- **Should LLN training in the workplace require a co-contribution from employers?**

Theme 3: Ensuring Victoria has a cohesive, collaborative adult community education system, with strong connections between adult community education and the mainstream training system

Introduction

Theme 3 considers opportunities for strengthened partnerships and connections across the adult community education and VET sectors to the benefit of learners. Of particular focus is the complimentary relationship between LLOs and TAFE institutes, opportunities to leverage local labour market programs, and consideration of the characteristics of a learner-centred adult community education system.

Linkages between adult community education and mainstream VET provision produce results

A study in 2001 examining potential linkages between the adult and community education sector and the mainstream VET sector found there was a considerable range of potential changes to better support student pathways (Saunders 2001).

Central to this study was the recognition that supported pathways offer a range of benefits for the learner, including better completion rates and employment or further education outcomes.

The study found there was an opportunity for greater standardisation and clear guidelines around how linkages could work; a need for staff with knowledge and skills to broker and manage linkages; sharing of information and good practice across sectors; and clarity of roles to reduce competition and promote complementarity (Saunders 2001).

Research regarding improving participation in VET for disadvantaged learners suggested that relationships between local community groups, VET providers (including adult and community education providers and mainstream providers) and labour market actors might be best coordinated at the regional level through regional frameworks (Lamb et al 2017).



CASE STUDY: 'OUR PLACE' DOVETON COLLEGE

The Colman Foundation has developed a social partnership model, 'Our Place – Integrated Learning Communities', embodying pride in place, excellence in practice and ownership in outcomes at Doveton College.

The key elements of this model are a more collaborative approach to delivery including:

- High quality early learning, starting prenatally
- High quality intentional teaching in primary school
- Provision of wrap-around health and wellbeing support, including Maternal and Child Health (MCH), allied health, GPs, paediatricians and immunisations
- Access to a range of adult activities including volunteering, formal and informal education and training and job-seeking support
- Provision of a wide range of out of hours (before/after school and weekend) activities for children and families

The 'Our Place' model provides resourcing and support for the elements that underpin successful integration projects:

- A commitment to community engagement and co-design to meet community needs and aspirations
- A shared vision and common language between partner agencies and community
- The capacity to be agile and responsive, adapting when initiatives are not working as intended and seizing opportunities that arise
- A commitment to learner progression and success



What makes an effective adult community education system?

Effective education systems support their communities by fostering learning, encouraging personal and educational development and building the skills and abilities for their current and future workforces and social structures. This cannot be done in isolation. Research about how to improve participation for disadvantaged learner suggests that there are a number of system-level factors for success:

- strong relationships between providers, employers and other service agencies within the local community.
- coordinated, collaborative approaches to engaging disadvantaged learners, including strong relationships between VET providers, local community groups and regional labour market actors
- organisation-wide commitment from individual training providers to supporting high needs learners, not just ad-hoc activities (Lamb et al 2018).

CASE STUDY: SwinLocal

There has been an ongoing relationship between the Learn Locals in the outer eastern suburbs and Swinburne University of Technology (TAFE Division) in the provision of educational services for many years. There are also long established relationships between Learn Locals in the area, particularly in the case of the Knox Learning Alliance uniting the five Learn Locals in the City of Knox. These relationships have produced the capacity to refer students to the provider offering the most suitable course, location and learning environment for each.

The SwinLocal collaboration in Melbourne's outer east was initiated by Swinburne University about 18 months ago with the purpose of re-invigorating its engagement with Learn Locals.

SwinLocal was developed through a facilitated workshop and follow-up meetings with potential Learn Local partners hosted by Swinburne. These meetings:

- Confirmed the shared view that student learning opportunities could be improved by collaboration between Learn Locals and TAFE
- Identified the basis upon which the collaboration would be developed – as a collaboration between equal partners
- Explored and outlined relevant issues, including the learning needs of clients and potential clients, the training programs best offered to meet them, the need for sensitivity to student circumstances, including to the barriers to participation they may face; and the environment and supports for students required for the collaboration to succeed in its aims
- Established the roles and responsibilities in the operation of the collaborative programs

Source: *A Roadmap for More Effective Collaboration between TAFE and Learn Locals*, VTA 2018.

The benefits of collaboration between LLOs and TAFE

Across the adult community education system there are few embedded pathways and delivery arrangements between Learn Local providers and TAFE Institutes, resulting in competition and duplication rather than intentional and meaningful partnerships.

Where partnerships do exist, at-risk learners benefit from both a supported and individualised gateway to education and the depth of offering available in a TAFE environment.

For example, the industry connections of TAFE can assist Learn Locals to tailor pre-accredited courses to employer needs, and pre-accredited vocational preparation courses can assist TAFE students with low LLN skills to complete a vocational certificate.

A more coherent adult community education system design, intrinsically connected to the broader Victorian VET system, might provide a more consistent and intentional gateway to the social and economic participation of 'at risk' Victorians.

WHAT DID WE HEAR IN CONSULTATIONS?

The relationship between LLOs and TAFE

Partnerships and pathways are central to successful adult community education delivery, but in consultations TAFE – LLO partnerships were identified as a significant challenge.

A few productive partnerships were identified but overall collaborations are not robust and providers do not see themselves as an integrated system and hence do not value shared planning and shared provision.

Some adult community education providers regard the cost or value of forming partnerships and negotiating pathways as greater than the perceived benefits in the current environment. As collaboration involves overheads, any partnership opportunity must be fit-for-purpose and productive.

- *'(The Learn Local) brand is invisible and we do not have the resources that TAFE does to promote our services.'*
- *'The role of Learn Locals needs clarification. We are not clear about the (sector-wide) purpose and mission of adult community education providers'*
- *'The adult community education sector should sit as a fourth sector among school, TAFE and university'*
- *'We reached a common understanding and struck an agreement but then the key people left and we are back to the beginning'*

Supported transition points for learners

The adult community education and broader VET systems can be highly complex for at-risk learners to negotiate. Even after engaging in a robust vocational pathway, learners can disengage at the point of transition, especially when moving from a supported community environment into a mainstream training environment (Kirby, 2000).

Opportunities to link with broader Victorian Government education initiatives

There are opportunities for the adult community education sector to better intersect with mainstream education settings, which will be supported by the following Victorian Government investments and initiatives:

Navigator

The Navigator program supports young people aged 12-17 years who are not connected to schools at all or those at risk of disengaging by providing intensive case management and assertive outreach support.

As a result of a successful pilot program, the Victorian Government has committed \$44 million to continue Navigator in the existing areas and expand the program state-wide over the next three years.

This further investment in Navigator will assist the 15 – 17 year olds highlighted in Chapter 2 to reconnect with school settings.

Reconnect

The Reconnect program assists people aged 17 – 64 years who have not completed Year 12 or a Certificate 2 to commence and stay in accredited training.

After a successful two rounds, the Victorian Government has invested \$12 million in a third round to further support this cohort.

The third round of Reconnect will further build the capacity of the Victorian VET system to respond to the needs of early school leavers across the State.

Apprenticeships and Traineeships Reform

Consultation by the Victorian Skills Commissioner identified that confidence in apprenticeships and traineeships has eroded over time, and decisive action is required to restore confidence.

To restore quality and confidence and attract new employers to take on apprentices and trainees, the 2018-19 Budget includes \$43.8 million over four years, made up of:

- \$2.8 million to reintroduce trade papers to certify successful completion of an apprenticeship
- \$31 million to expand independent end-of-training testing of apprentices and trainees
- \$10 million to update the training curriculum to meet current industry needs (to be found through offsets).

In particular, the Skills First evaluation will intersect with FOAL's strategic focus on strengthened linkages to industry needs.

Transforming Career Education in Victorian Government Schools

In the 2018/19 Budget, the Victorian Government has invested \$109 million over four years and \$26.7 million ongoing to redesign career education, to help students make better career and pathway decisions, and to meet business and industry needs.

This aligns closely and sets a blueprint for FOAL's strategic focus on career planning for learners and strengthened linkages to industry needs.

Supporting existing labour market programs to build employment pathways

There are State and Commonwealth-funded labour market programs in every local government area in Victoria. These include Jobs Victoria providers, which offer bespoke, place-based responses to the employment needs of the local community.

There is significant value in adult community education partnerships with labour market programs. There is a mutual benefit in a robust and locally-responsive education program which labour market programs can leverage to upskill program participants, and clear employment pathways for learners in adult community education.

Options and Discussion Questions for Theme 3

Clarifying roles and embedding a culture of collaboration between learn local organisations and tafe institutes

FOAL consultations highlighted the need to urgently reduce competition and enhance collaboration between TAFE institutes and LLOs. The FOAL project is seeking stakeholders' views about how best to do this.

Options include clarifying institutional roles and the Government's expectations about collaboration and performance. This could be achieved in part through a major policy statement about the distinct but intended complementary roles of TAFE and Learn Local providers, articulated with the associated expectations of performance.

Discussion Questions

- **What are the appropriate models of TAFE and Learn Local collaboration, and how could this become an embedded element of the Victorian VET sector?**
- **What other key elements of a learner-centred system could be highlighted in any formalisation of roles and expectations in adult community education?**
- **Are there strategic implications for the adult community education sector of a more collaborative model between TAFE and Learn Locals?**

Assisting learners to navigate the system and their careers

The FOAL project is seeking input from stakeholders on how to assist learners to navigate the education system, and make important career pathway choices linked to their skills and capabilities.

The capacity for learners to be taught to recognise their skill strengths and weaknesses is one important issue in the development of effective pathway choices. Although this can be factored in to course content there is also a need for support services to assist learners to make informed decisions about their learning journey.

Under one option, a trial of independent Learner Advocate broker positions, intentionally located with TAFE institutes but offering independent advice to learners, could enhance learner self-determination in education pathway decision making.

Learner Advocates could be linked to Skills and Jobs Centres, and be equipped with specialist careers coaching expertise to build learner confidence and clarity in their vocational aspirations.

Discussion Questions:

- **How could Learner Advocates remain informed about emerging local needs and opportunities across the education network and local labour market?**
- **Are there successful existing models assisting learners to navigate the adult community education system and their career paths?**
- **What other services or supports can assist learners to transition from adult community education provision to mainstream training?**



Better understanding what a learner-centred system looks like

Adult community education providers have always delivered learner-focused programs. However, the adult community education system settings is often geared towards programs, grants and inputs rather than being designed from a learner-centred perspective. The FOAL project is seeking feedback from stakeholders on the appropriate model for a learner-centred adult community education system.

In a fully 'learner-centred' adult community education system:

- the self-determined needs, aspirations and goals of learners would be at the centre of all adult community education responses
- support for learners would occur at levels: intentionally in the classroom, at the institutional level, at the education system level, via embedded relationships with industry, and in place-based responses to the needs of the local community.
- Funding would be based on quantifiable learner demand

Each of these system levels would have its own specific accountabilities in building the capabilities of learners, which occurs across a number of phases.

The matrix at **Appendix 3** may be useful in framing discussion about these matters.

Motivation / Aspiration: Learners need to be supported to set goals and understand their existing skills and attributes to inform sustainable and meaningful education pathways.

Access: Learners need to be able to easily access and navigate adult community education pathways.

Participation: Learners benefit from a robust, evidence-based adult community education curriculum which is informed by teaching best practice and real industry needs.

Attainment / Transition: Learners in adult community education need to be empowered to progress towards achieving their self-determined aspirations and goals.

Discussion Questions:

- What would be the key elements of a learner-centred system?
- What systemic change would need to occur for the adult community sector to reflect a learner-centred system?
- What other measures could be taken to enhance performance of the adult community education sector as a whole?

SUCH A TRIAL COULD BE CO-DESIGNED WITH ALL PARTICIPATING PROVIDERS, FEATURE A 'NO-COMPETITION' POLICY, AND BE SUPPORTED BY A STIMULUS PACKAGE AND WORKFORCE STRATEGY.

Trialling a learner-centred system

To develop a Learner-Centred System model, TAFE institutes, Learn Locals and other community support agencies could be resourced to trial co-delivery approaches. Such approaches could involve:

- co-delivery of courses linked to local industry need
- new approaches to resource allocation
- co-location opportunities
- partnerships with non-vocational community supports
- practice models that respond to the specific needs of the local community

Networks of providers including a TAFE, Learn Local providers, local labour market programs and community support agencies could be established to build place-based responses to local learner needs. Such a trial could be co-designed with all participating providers, feature a 'no-competition' policy, and be supported by a stimulus package and workforce strategy.

The FOAL project is seeking feedback from stakeholders on how to trial learner-centred approaches to adult community education.

Discussion Questions

- **How could Learner-Centred trials work in practice?**
- **What elements and attributes facilitate success in place-based models?**
- **What sort of stimulus would be required to make participation in learner-centred trials viable for providers?**
- **How could it be ensured that learner-centred trials respond to the needs of target cohorts?**



APPENDIX 1 – STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

GROUP CONSULTATIONS	
ORGANISATION	CONSULTATION SESSION
Preston and Reservoir Adult Community Education	Melbourne
Mountain District Learning Centre	Melbourne
Cire Services	Melbourne
Yarraville Community Centre	Melbourne
Wyndam Community and Education Centre	Melbourne
Laverton Community Integrated Services	Melbourne
North Melbourne Language and Learning	Melbourne
Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre	Melbourne
Living and Learning at Adjani	Melbourne
The Centre Continuing Education	Bendigo
BRITE	Bendigo
VIVID	Bendigo
Swinburne University of Technology	Bendigo
Campaspe College	Bendigo
Rural Industries Skills Training	Geelong
Encompass Community Services Geelong	Geelong
Diversitat	Geelong

GROUP CONSULTATIONS	
ORGANISATION	CONSULTATION SESSION
GenU Training	Geelong
Advance	Moe
Gippsland Employment Skills Training	Moe
Paynesville Neighbourhood Centre	Moe
BRACE Education and Training / Skills Plus	Moe
Community College Gippsland	Moe

INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATIONS		
NAME	POSITION	ORGANISATION
Cath Scarth	Chief Executive Officer	AMES Australia
Catherine Devlin	Chief Executive Officer	Adult Learning Australia
Don Perlmut	Chief Executive Officer	Community Colleges Australia
Mark Stone	Chief Executive Officer	Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Meg Cotter	President	Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council
Nicole Battle	Chief Executive Officer	Neighbourhood Houses Victoria
Norman Gray	Chief Executive Officer	Box Hill Institute / Centre for Adult Learning
Peter Noonan	Professor	Victoria University
Stephen Lamb	Professor	Victoria University

APPENDIX 2 – DEFINITIONS APPLICABLE TO THIS PAPER

Adult Learner

Learners aged between 17 and 72 who are not engaged in a school or ‘mainstream’ education setting, with a particular focus on:

- Victorians at the lowest levels of literacy
- Workers placed at risk by a transitioning economy
- 17 – 19 year old early school leavers who are not engaged in education or employment

Note: 15 – 17 year old early school leavers will also be considered in the context of engagement in the adult community education system.

Adult community education

Adult community education includes a diverse array of vocational and learner interest-focused education and training that fosters the development of skills required for individuals to participate fully in their communities and the economy.

Learn Local Organisations, TAFEs and Dual Sector Universities all offer elements of adult community education, which is defined for the purpose of this paper as pre-accredited training delivered by Learn Local Organisations and accredited foundation skills training delivered by Learn Local Organisations, TAFE Institutes and Dual Sector Universities.

Learn Local

Learn Local Organisations deliver education and training in community settings. They are independent and not-for-profit. There are 300 LLOs across regional, rural and metropolitan Victoria, Australia. Every year, over 54,000 Victorians undertake government subsidised education and training programs through government registered LLOs.

Foundation Skills

Foundation skills training aims to ensure that students enrolling in vocational education and training (VET) are equipped with the skills and abilities required to successfully complete a vocational qualification.

Foundation skills training is tailored to the individual needs of the learner based on an evaluation of their current capabilities. Foundation skills courses include the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA), Certificate of English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Certificate in Skills for Vocational Pathways.

Foundation skills training can be delivered as a stand-alone program prior to commencing a vocational qualification, concurrently with a vocational qualification in a parallel learning approach, or integrated in vocational qualification training.

Pre-accredited

The primary purpose of pre-accredited education and training is to provide opportunities that engage and initiate vocational pathways for the most educationally disadvantaged learners. Pre-accredited courses, delivered by LLOs, address the particular needs of adults who have experienced barriers to education in the past and find it difficult to undertake accredited courses as their first step into vocational training.

At-risk Victorians

In the context of FOAL, at-risk Victorians refers to the:

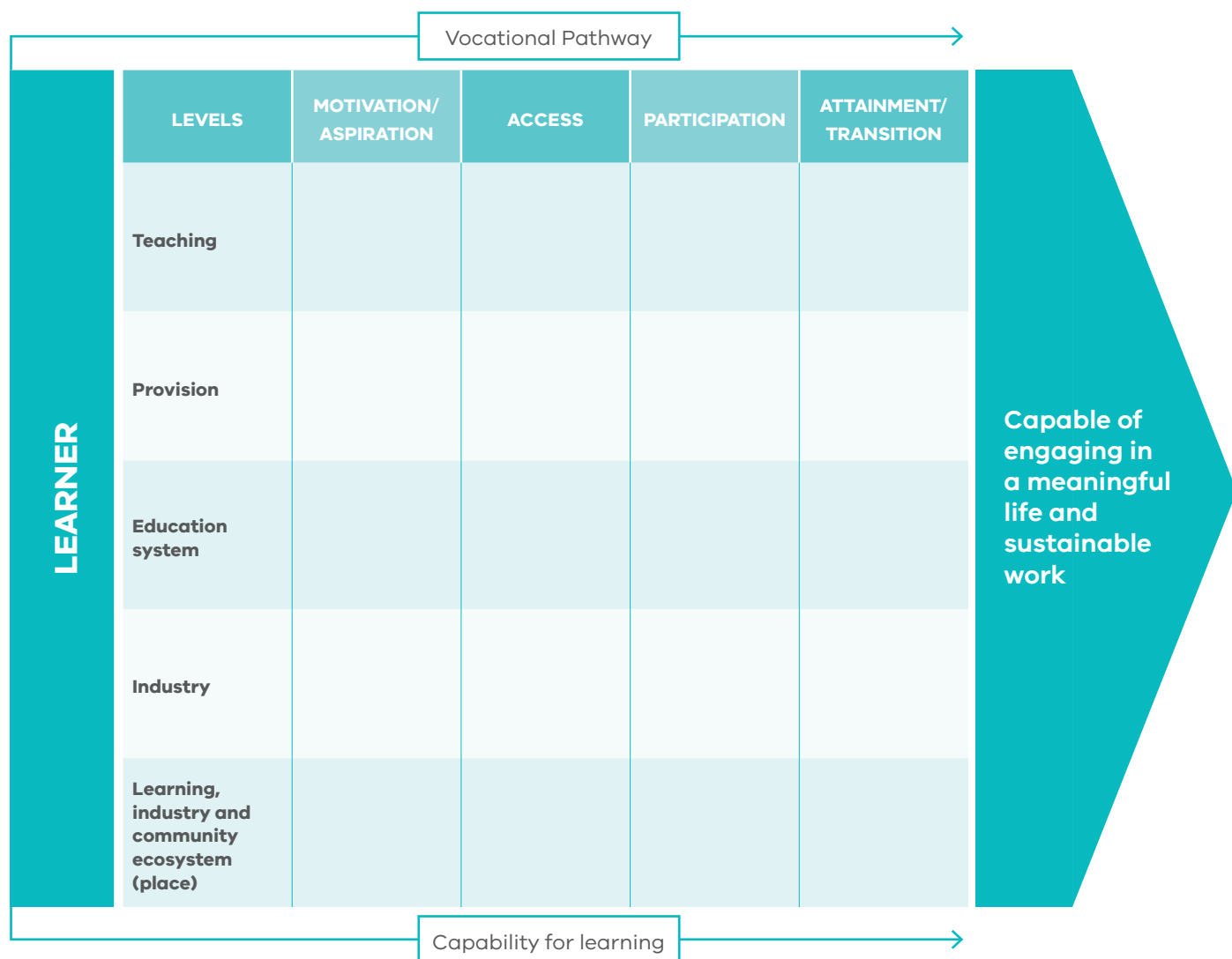
- Approximately 650,000 adult Victorians at the lowest levels of literacy;
- Approximately 265,000 adult Victorians with low educational attainment in low skills jobs; and
- Approximately 20,000 15 to 19 year olds not engaged in education, training or employment

High Needs Learners

High Needs Learners refers to learners with multiple and complex needs, such as challenges with mental health or housing instability.

APPENDIX 3 -

A MOCK-UP OF A LEARNER-CENTRED ADULT COMMUNITY EDUCATION SYSTEM



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Notes



