

Summary

The House Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training will inquire into and report on adult literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills in Australia, including but not limited to:

Terms of Reference

.The relationship between adult literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills and socio-demographic characteristics, particularly migrant status, First Nations status and individuals living in households that have experienced intergenerational unemployment;

- The effect that literacy and numeracy skills have on an individual's labour force participation and wages;
- Links between literacy and social outcomes such as health, poverty, ability to care for other family members and participation in civic life;
- The relationship between parents' literacy skills and their children's education and literacy skill development from birth to post-secondary education;

Adult literacy for Aboriginal students to improve their employment prospects and to enable the mentoring and practical support of their school age children

I taught Aboriginal students almost exclusively between 2013 and 2019 in five country and remote locations. Most of these students had parents or carers who were unemployed or casually employed due to poor educational achievement. Many parents or carers wanted their children to be educated however, they were often poor mentors. There was frequent absenteeism, it was rare for a student to attend school consistently. Children would often be taken away with their parents or carers to attend gatherings such as funerals or to a regional centre some distance away for shopping or hospital appointments. Absences would be for many days or even weeks and during this time,

unless they attended the local school, which was not common, no formal education was undertaken. Even if they did attend a school temporarily, their specific needs would not necessarily be met due to their temporary status and this period of time could not be counted as educationally profitable. Students were not in a position to undertake homework due to unsuitable home environments, they were not motivated to work after school hours, nor were their parents or carers in a position to assist them due to their own low literacy and numeracy levels.

Many students were able to achieve up to Year 2 level in reading and writing, a few achieved up to Year 5 level. It was rare for a student to achieve higher than Year 6 level throughout their entire schooling. As students moved higher up the school and their achievement remained static, their shame in their lack of achievement increased. This would erode their confidence and their sense of self worth. Marginalization, particularly amongst boys sometimes led to antisocial and criminal behaviour.