

Dear Sirs

Parliament inquiry into Adult literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills in Australia

I wish to make a submission for the House Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training inquiry into adult literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills in Australia.

- Relationship between adult literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills and socio-demographic characteristics, particularly migrant status, First Nations status and individuals living in households with intergenerational unemployment, low income and meaningful respect and acceptance.

I have had a number of personal friends with migrants from various countries – China, Iran, India where the level of adult literacy has been an obstacle for them in gaining meaningful employment. Their lack of self confidence primarily related to literacy has affected also their ability to integrate well into Australian society. They then tend to stick to their own cultural groups instead of integrating well with the whole diverse cultures in Australia.

They have difficulty in getting employment and oftentimes when they find employment, they are paid cash and invariably at questionable rates particularly in food establishments.

Consequently these financial pressures and self-esteem will impact on the overall well-being of the migrants, their families and their communities.

- The availability, impact and effectiveness of adult literacy and numeracy educational programs in Australia and internationally;

I have been involved in the Read Write Now and the Adult Migrant English Program as a volunteer and these two inter-related programs are beneficial to the community for the following reasons:

- The use of volunteer resources brings a diversity that can be matched to the needs of the “customer”
- these programs allows for social interactions and these are essential with migrants and First Nation status. On-line courses have limited effectiveness.
- These programs are paced to the needs of the “customer” and not driven by the getting an outcome quickly. This is important to the “customer” as traditional training has not met their needs and in a sense failed to help them achieve literacy in the first instance.

Given the importance of adult literacy, numeracy and IT literacy of migrants / citizens / First Nation in not just supporting their employment but their overall well-being, I submit to the inquiry that these programs continue to be supported and if anything, to be further resourced by the Commonwealth and State.

