

SUBMISSION TO PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO ADULT LITERACY

1. An Australia-wide survey some years ago found that 48% of the national population had insufficient literacy skills to cope with life, work, parental duties. Thus also the advertising or other distribution of government information fails to achieve its goal (eg Covid-19 info).
2. Various Australian states have sought to address this literacy and numeracy problem. In WA, the Read-Write-Now Program was begun in the 1970s to assist TAFE apprenticed mechanics with written tests of their competence. This program focused on primarily Australian-born adult students, including indigenous students, but also migrant adult students. This was organised by a paid head office in Perth city, volunteer coordinators in regional areas of the city and state-wide, and volunteer personal tutors who were mostly retirees. Tutors work with adult students one-on-one in local libraries for one hour per week, requiring at least one hour of homework weekly by students to reinforce learning.
3. Focus is on whatever a student seeks, whether initially the lower and upper case of the alphabet, spelling, grammar, reading and oral and written simple sentences, written reports as work requirements, numeracy skills, assistance to apply for and achieve at education at secondary or tertiary level, competence with electronic gadgets, using dictionaries or atlases, and other problem-solving that does not overlap with social welfare officers' roles
4. Adult students come from both lower and higher socioeconomic areas.
5. Preliminary training of tutors by head office is done on the understanding of a commitment to tutor at least one student. Most tutor more. A few tutors have tutored for two decades, sometimes working with up to three students each week, and have concurrently been area coordinators.
6. Prospective adult students apply to RWN head office which advises the area coordinator who arranges for a local tutor to work with a student in easy reach of the students' home.
7. Regular checks are made of tutors' and students' progress and seeking feedback, and pairing might be relatively brief or more long-term while progress is made.
- 8 RWN head office staff also organise a couple of seminars and workshops during the year to refresh and upgrade tutors' skills, obtaining speakers with expertise to assist.
9. RWN head office, comprising but a few paid stalwarts, is required to report and to seek renewal of operating funds yearly. //

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Perth

28 February 2021

ADDENDUM TO SUBMISSION TO PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO ADULT LITERACY IN AUST
SUBMITTED 28th FEB 2021 by Neil Macdonald Perth WA

1. Why do adults do twelve years schooling and still lack literacy skills?
2. It is now considered that if a child does not learn persistence when between 8-11 years of age then he or she never will do so.
3. Electronic gadgets prompt/correct shortcomings enough for most people to get by but do not make up for shortcomings in many instances, whether absorption of important information for life, work requirements or parental responsibilities including introducing kids to literacy early.
4. Involvement in the likes of WA's RWN Program for adults often overcomes the shortcomings for the minority of under-achievers who enter the program, sometimes quite markedly.

Monday 1st March 2021