



THE HON KAREN ANDREWS MP

ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Our Ref MC17-002759

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Ms Daniella Mayer
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Dear Ms Mayer

Thank you for your letter to Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Minister for Education and Training, concerning literacy and numeracy training in the workplace. As the matter you have raised falls within my portfolio responsibilities as Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills, your letter was referred to me for response.

In your letter, you seek the development of a new program to replace the previous Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program. The closure of this program was announced as part of the 2014 Federal Budget. As I advised in my letter to Ms Jenni Anderson, the President of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) on 15 September 2016, the Australian Government cannot commit to a replacement program to WELL at this time.

The Government recognises the strong links between foundation skills (English language, literacy and numeracy skills, and employability skills) and workforce participation and productivity, and to gaining and remaining in employment. Reflecting this, the Government makes a significant ongoing investment to foundation skills of around \$1.6 billion over the forward estimates through major programs such as the Adult Migrant English Program and the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program.

These major programs are supplemented by a range of specific initiatives. For example, I have been advised that you are a member of the National Project Reference Group which is overseeing the development of a National Foundation Skills Professional Standards Framework (the Framework). I would like to thank you for ACAL's contribution to this process. As you would be aware, the Framework aims to assist with strengthening the capabilities of foundation skills practitioners, to enable more effective teaching of foundation skills. While this work is being led by South Australia, it has been supported by funding from the Australian Government. In addition, the Government is continuing to finalise the development of the Foundation Skills Assessment Tool, which I have discussed in previous correspondence with ACAL.

You also raise the issue of foundation skills training and support for Indigenous people in remote communities. I note that the Government continues to support the development of language, literacy and numeracy training in remote communities through the provision of the SEE program. The SEE program is available to jobseekers in some remote communities, or through a distance education provider.

