

ACAL position paper

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the ACAL Committee



ACAL – Australian Council for Adult Literacy

TAE80113 - Graduate Diploma of Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy Practice

The Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) is particularly interested in the current provision of adult literacy and numeracy teacher education. The TAE80113 is a specialist, practical qualification in teaching adult language, literacy and numeracy (LLN). It is one of only two qualifications in adult literacy and numeracy on training.gov.au in Australia currently, and is the only one with a practical applied focus.

TAE80113 prepares adult literacy and numeracy teachers for a variety of roles, including in vocational education (VET) and community based programs. The VET sector has great need to provide support for apprentices and students lacking strong academic backgrounds and to address the lack of suitably qualified LLN teachers to work in remote and regional communities. TAE80113 provides opportunities to introduce new teachers to the field, to provide a support base for those with units such as TAELLN411 who benefit from contact from practitioners with deeper understandings, and to provide opportunities for LN teachers to disseminate information about best practice in LN to others.

There are currently 15 providers listed on training.gov.au who are eligible to offer the qualification. Many other postgraduate qualifications in the field have closed due to policy and funding volatility in the past decade. There are other tertiary programs focussing on school literacy or adult English language acquisition, but adult literacy and numeracy is a very different field with unique issues, learning materials and methodologies. The TAE80113 provides a human resource for upskilling and training staff and ensures essential skills are provided within the Australian education sector.

There are three issues associated with the Graduate Diploma that concern ACAL:

1. Lack of incentive to engage in higher learning about literacy and numeracy
2. Lack of assistance to access the qualification
3. Barriers that prevent qualified and experienced literacy and numeracy teachers delivering the qualification

Lack of incentive to engage in higher learning about literacy and numeracy.

We value all educational opportunities for practitioners to increase their understanding of, and ability to assist with, LN issues. A workforce benefits from practitioners who have a deeper understanding of theoretical underpinnings, advanced design and delivery skills, and an understanding of big picture issues such as the impacts of policy and research. Expanding the number of graduates in the TAE80113 would improve VET outcomes, particularly in relation to the TAELLN411, which points to the need to seek assistance from LN specialists as required. At present there are few programs that mandate higher level qualifications for delivery of LN courses in Australia, which is a disincentive to undertaking a qualification. However, maintaining a workforce of experienced practitioners who have knowledge of theoretical underpinnings of literacy and numeracy teaching and learning is valuable.

Ongoing discussions and research into the quality of teaching and learning in the VET sector indicates the importance of recognising that the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment is a starting point. The TAE80113 is one of the important pathways that need to remain on the table for educators to build on their skills and capabilities.

Lack of assistance to access the qualification.

Government funding for initial training and professional development in Australia is low and has been described as 'a dimension of the adult literacy and numeracy field that has reached a parlous state and is badly in need of national renewal' (Black & Yasukawa 2010, p.51). The Australian Government Department of Education and Training have discontinued the scholarship program that enabled individuals to study a suitable qualification to become an adult literacy practitioner. Compounding the removal of the scholarship, on 15 January 2018 the TAE80113 was removed from the list of eligible VET Student Loans (VSL) courses (VSL commenced on 1 January 2017, replacing the VET FEE-HELP scheme, which ceased for new students on 31 December 2016). Reducing the accessibility of this course will impact directly on enrolments and be reflected in fewer trained individuals available to work in the field of adult LLN, an outcome which contravenes the spirit and intention of current Commonwealth Government policy.

The recent decision by the Commonwealth to remove the Graduate Diploma of Adult LLN from the list of courses eligible for a VET Student Loan is of great concern to all stakeholders in the field of adult language, literacy and numeracy. This decision represents a serious departure from current Commonwealth Government policy which has actively targeted the improvement of Australian workers' LLN skills as a national priority. The release of the National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults in 2012 acknowledged the serious impact that the limited LLN skills of 7.5 million Australian workers has on national productivity, workplace health and safety and the opportunities available for individual Australian workers.

Barriers that prevent qualified and experienced literacy and numeracy teachers delivering the qualification.

ASQA have recently set regulations that trainers and assessors delivering any qualification or skill set from the TAE Training Package, other than the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, Assessor Skill Set or Advanced Assessor Skill Set, must hold a TAE training product at least to the level being delivered. Demonstrated equivalence is not permitted.

ACAL supports the requirement that trainers and assessors of TAE80113 must hold a relevant qualification at an AQF 8 or 9 level at least. However, the requirement that these qualifications must be TAE qualifications is not informed by an understanding of the LLN practitioner cohort. Many LLN trainers and assessors (teachers) hold university qualifications in adult LLN teaching at AQF 8 or 9 level. Their qualifications include postgraduate qualifications (Graduate Diploma or Master) in Adult Basic Education, and Adult Literacy and Numeracy Teaching. These qualifications have the benefit of integrating current international research pertinent to adult LLN practice and leadership, and the scholarly interpretation of their relevance through input from research by active academics in the field. However, under the new regulations, these qualifications are no longer considered relevant.

The requirement for trainers and assessors to hold the TAE80113 is out of step with the research undertaken as part of the National Foundation Skills Strategy. The Foundation Skills Professional Standards Framework identifies that no single qualification defines a literacy numeracy specialist.

The impact of this new requirement is that experienced and already qualified teachers are now required to engage in an expensive and exceedingly time-consuming RPL process to obtain the qualification. These applicants, who are developing no new skills, but are simply serving a compliance criteria, are taking places that should be attracting new teachers. The criteria for teaching TAE80113 is the TAE80113 qualification **and** extensive experience, described by ASQA as: 'current industry skills directly relevant to the training and assessment being provided, and current knowledge and skills in vocational training and learning that informs their training and assessment. Given that the TAE80113 has only been in place since 2013 and its predecessor (TAE70110) since 2011, the concept that the teachers deemed by ASQA as most qualified to teach this qualification have only been in the field for up to seven years, whilst experienced practitioners with decades of practical experience are not considered appropriate, is concerning.

ACAL supports the following actions:

- Petitioning of state governments where TAE80113 is currently delivered to reinstate the VSL status of TAE80113 (VSL status can be accorded to qualifications on two state subsidy lists: presently Victoria is the only state that retains TAE80113 on the subsidy lists)
 - NSW: [John Barilaro](#), Minister for Skills
 - Qld: [Hon Shannon Fentiman](#), Minister for Training and Skills Development
 - Qld: [Hon Grace Grace](#), Minister for Education
 - SA: [Hon Susan Close](#), Minister for Education and Child Development and Minister for Higher Education and Skills (check results of 2018 election for updates)
 - NT: [Hon Eva Dina Lawler](#) MLA, Minister for Education
- Petitioning of Commonwealth Government for reintroduction of other incentives (eg scholarships, career pathways) for engagement in LN qualifications:
 - Minister for Education and Training, Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham
 - Minister for Jobs and Innovation, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
 - Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion
 - Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills, The Hon Karen Andrews MP
- Revision of TAE80113 qualification rules through the review of the TAE training package. **Have your say here:** Send your feedback to info@skillsforaustralia.com by **Tuesday 3rd April, 2018.**

References:

Black, S & Yasukawa, K 2010, 'Time for national renewal: Australian adult literacy and numeracy as 'foundation skills'', *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*, vol.18, no.2, pp.43—57.

National Foundation Skills Strategy (NFSS) 2015, *Foundation Skills qualifications stocktake, National Foundation Skills Strategy Project*, <<http://www.statedevelopment.sa.gov.au/upload/NFSS/report/qualifications-stocktake.pdf?t=1457675049673>>.

Websites:

<https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/TAE80113>

<https://www.education.gov.au/vet-student-loans>

<https://www.education.gov.au/vet-student-loans>

<https://www.education.gov.au/vet-student-loans/VSLmethodology>

https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/smartandskilled/nsw_skills_list.html

<https://nt.gov.au/learning/adult-education-and-training/northern-territory-training-entitlement>

<https://training.qld.gov.au/docs-data/strategies/vetinvest/subsidieslist>

<http://www.skillsgateway.training.qld.gov.au/content/user/subsidy/SUBSIDIES-LIST.pdf>

<http://www.dtwd.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/uploads/ppr-piql-31jan2018-v1.pdf>

<http://www.skills.tas.gov.au/funding>

<https://www.asqa.gov.au/news-publications/publications/fact-sheets/meeting-trainer-and-assessor-requirements>