

Lifelong learning, work and livelihood in Australia

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**Adult
Learning
Australia** INC

Lifelong and Lifewide Learning for All Australians



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United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Australia and lifelong learning policy

- Australia **does not** have a lifelong learning policy.
- Why not?
- We don't need one (Karmel):

In a sense, Australia does not have a policy because it does not need one: our whole approach has encouraged lifelong learning (2004, p. 14). ... Australia does not have a life-long learning policy as such. Nevertheless, the level of adult participation in education and training in Australia is very high, and Australia could claim to be at the forefront of lifelong learning, at least in terms of formal higher education and TVET (Karmel, 2004, p. 18).

Australia and lifelong learning policy

- We **do** need a formal policy (Kearns):

To date [1999] the Commonwealth government has shown no interest in monitoring other types of educational outcomes such as personal satisfaction, increased self-esteem, community involvement or social skills. Yet these outcomes are important indicators of an inclusive education system and an individual's motivation to become a lifelong learner (Kearns cited in Karmel, 2004, p. 17).

Australia and lifelong learning policy

- Broadly buy into an understanding of LLL that is about acquiring skills and knowledge throughout life through education, training, work and life experience (.” NCVET online Glossary, 27 March 2013)

LLL – conceptual evolution

- Narrow and employment focussed
- Late 1980s onward, Australia developed an elaborate system of qualifications, competencies and funding around learning that is deemed to be work-related.
- Sitting behind this is the view of an anticipated and positive link between educational attainment and employment. Learning is linked to employability.
- LLL =post compulsory education and training and VET

System of LLL

Sectors include:

- adult education (under varied titles in different states)
- VET- public and private providers, enterprise providers
- Higher education- public and private providers and dual sector institutions.
- Elaborate? Opaque.
- ..

LLL profile

5000 Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) including TAFE Institutes, small private colleges, community colleges, workplace training (in organisations)

3 million students (1/3 publicly funded)

5000 recognised qualifications

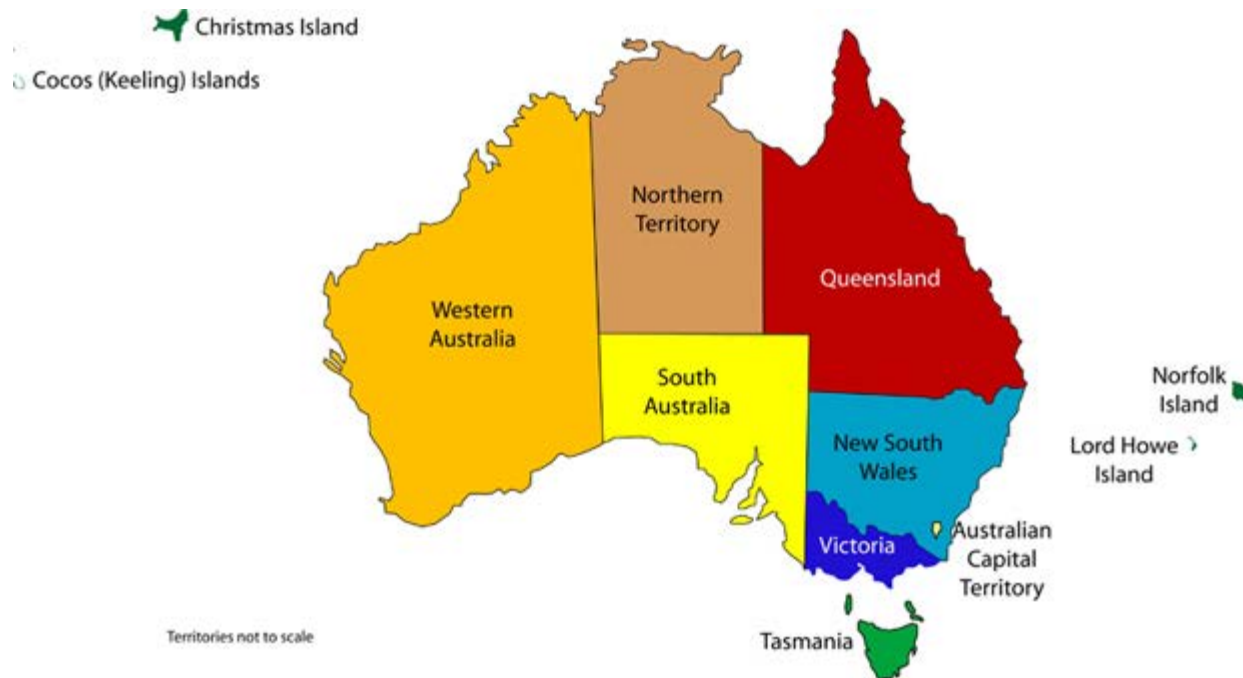
9 different funding bodies

1 national and 3 state regulators – registration and quality of RTOs

Political context

Federal and State and Territory Governments of Australia have regulatory oversight of formal training in the VET system

Jointly responsible for providing public funding



Types of LLL programs

- Certificate 1 in Work Education (train people with intellectual disability)
- Language, literacy and numeracy programs
- Vocational Graduate Diploma of Aquaculture Hatchery Management
- Pre-apprenticeship programs –to ‘taste’ an area of learning
- Apprenticeship –sign with an employer and block release for training (training wage)
- Accredited programs
- Competency-based
- A unit of competency, a cluster of units, a whole qualification (skill sets for a specific job role)

Funding

- \$5.67 billion in 2009 (MCTEE, 2011, p. 5)
- Represents funding for tuition and does not include incentives or other benefits paid to individuals or employers
- Government funding allocated through the measure of the volume of training in dollars per student contact hour to a provider (not on outcome or qualification [yet]).
- 13% decline in government funding (MCTEE, 2011)
- Moves to a user pay model – eg Victoria, only funded if enrol in a course higher than existing qualification

Governance

- **Before** - when most post school educational organisations were publically funded. there was a strong accountability for the funds expended but a modest review of quality of educational provision or outcomes.
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- **Now** - educational organisations are profit making and independent of government influence, new arrangements are being put into place to audit quality educational practices eg by ASQA nationally and in some states eg Victoria

Work and learning

14.8 million people between 15 and 64 years in the labour force:

- 20% enrolled in learning

Of that 20%:

- 27% at school
- 21% in a VET organisation
- 39% at university
- 13% other providers eg adult community education (ABS, 2011)





What does the data tell us about the link between lifelong learning and employment prospects in Australia?

Given that there is no formal policy, we need to INFER answers to this from the trends on:

- participation in learning
- outcomes of participation

Multiple layering of disadvantage is present

- **Multiple disadvantage** – intergenerational disadvantage -parents with low levels of education have children with low levels
- **Remoteness** – the further out you are, the more disadvantage you face

Gender inequities

- Effects of low skill is more marked for men in terms of workforce participation. Rising rates of UE for early school leavers with no qualifications.
- Women– with no post school qualifications – have increased in numbers of those participating in workforce to nearly 70% of total workforce in 2006. But in feminised labour markets – retail, hospitality, community care.
- Women’s participation in workforce lower than men’s - 72% males vs 59% women in 2010. More women in part time work, less knowledge intensive jobs and the lower remuneration levels that accompany that type of work

Skills utilisation

- Post VET – 2/3 of graduates from lower paid occupations do not move into a different occupation level after training or gain higher pay.
- After graduation, individuals from low paid occupations are more likely to work part-time and be casual.
- Motivation to engage in learning is often more about satisfying job requirements and maintaining job security than seeking higher earnings and job advancement.

Experience and qualifications

- Relevant experience – novices find it hard to find jobs, migrants too,.
- Strong rates of skill underutilisation. Experience counts more.
- Yet 85% of VET students work part time or full time – they do have experience.
- Migrants – overqualified and skills mismatch – 30% of migrants have university degree working as taxi drivers compared with native born counterparts.

Demand matters!

- Industry demand determines employment opportunities – for example, –Northern Territory and Western Australia –low levels of educational achievement and high levels of employment due to industry demand– mining industry





Gaps and dilemmas

The Australian case of lifelong learning

Dominant *educational logic* in the Australian system of lifelong learning (Wheelahan, Moodie and Buchanan, 2012)

- This means a weaker link to work, stronger connections to tertiary education and less distinct vocational education.
- Lower status of VET knowledge
- the effects on vocational education are that it “...is defined more by its lower status than its stronger orientation to employment. Employers select applicants with the greatest potential rather than those with vocational skills...” (Iannelli and Raffe, cited in Wheelahan, Moodie and Buchanan, 2012, p. 17).

Narrowness

- Dominant education logic resulted in an education and training system with a narrow approach to lifelong learning– **which focuses on life span than on life-relatedness.**
- Yet ‘lifelong learning’ as a narrow concept still held as a way to redress gaps:

...Efforts to deal with these problems, within the framework of VET policy, point towards a role for lifelong learning and for stronger linkages between educational institutions and local labour markets (Watson, 2011, p. 60)

The report argues:

- Lifelong learning needs broadening - more than a 'school-work nexus' – should include health and wellbeing (Wyn, 2008)
- Broader conception means seeing a stronger intersection between wellbeing and work
- Wellbeing is currently narrowly conceived
- Narrow conception of wellbeing means a deficit model – it is peripheral to VET

A broader vision for LLL advocated

- From learning *through* life to learning *for* life
- A purpose for lifelong learning that goes beyond human capital development – personal wellbeing, community cohesiveness and human capital development.

Rethinking learning transitions

- Multiple transitions – people move in and around employment, underemployment, UE
- Rhythm– ‘stop and starts’, ‘learning episodes’ (Billett et al., 2012) , not constant movement forward from one point to another (Wyn, Lantz and Harris, 2012).
- transitional labour markets see working lives as more complex than transitions from from youth to adulthood and from education/ school to work (Buchanan et al. 2009).



Imagination is needed...

[so that]... lifelong learning may assume significance for its relatedness to life as well as life span, to different life contexts and to the many ways in which productive livelihoods are crafted – for young and old.