

**Note:** The sections in the Paper which are headed “What this tells us” will be the basis for the Panel’s recommendations.

Where questions are broken into life stages (early years, school years and adult years), you can provide responses to any or all life stages.

Please indicate clearly at the beginning of any responses you wish to remain confidential.

Unless indicated as confidential, responses will be treated as public information and published on our website. Please see the [Public Submissions Policy](#) for further information.

**Name:** Malcolm Wells, Chair

**Organisation:** 26TEN Coalition

**Postcode:** Statewide

**Question One: Are there any key themes we have not identified to improve literacy across:**

### **The Early Years (0-4 years-old)**

#### **Awareness and Support for parents and carers with literacy challenge**

26TEN Coalition agrees that efforts to support parents, families, and carers to understand and fulfill their ongoing influence on their child’s language and literacy development should be prioritised and expanded. The **shared responsibility** between parents, educators and other service providers should also continue to be promoted.

Through the 26TEN Communities, partnerships are being formed with Child and Family Centres to support families, parents, and carers with their literacy and numeracy skills. Supporting and continuing to work with parents/carers to build their literacy and numeracy skills will help them to fully participate in this shared responsibility. This is where place-based, local led initiatives such as 26TEN Communities can work best, investing in and leveraging off existing community services and relationships.

26TEN Coalition also agrees that parents, families and carers need to be aware of supports available. Where parents struggle with their own literacy, supports such as 26TEN and the statewide adult literacy service delivered by Libraries Tasmania, could be promoted in early learning and school environments.

#### **Early Learning programs in Libraries Tasmania**

As acknowledged by the Panel, Libraries Tasmania play an important role in supporting early learning within communities through accessible and free early programs across its statewide network.

It’s **important to highlight** that these programs (eg. Baby Play, Rock and Rhyme and Story Time) focus on **encouraging** parents and carers to support their children’s literacy and language development through reading, singing and fostering connection.

### **The School Years (5-17 years-old)**

As mentioned above (The Early Years – **Awareness and Support for parents and carers with literacy challenge**).

### **The Adult Years (18+ years-old)**

#### **Reflecting the important role of adults**

26TEN Coalition commends the wholistic approach the Panel has adopted and encourages that concept to be reflected in the Community-wide Framework.

The 26TEN Coalition **would like to include adults** under the following **Principles** (page 13):

- *“Underpinned by evidence-based research”* should be expanded to cover all stages of life from early years to adults, as this is equally applicable.

#### **The role of the Tasmanian Council for Adult Literacy (TCAL)**

The role of TCAL as the professional body for adult literacy practitioners. 26TEN works closely with TCAL to support their activities. These include professional development sessions for practitioners.

#### **Tasmania’s Adult Learning Strategy (2020-2023)**

The [Adult Learning strategy](#) is managed by Skills Tasmania. It brings together a range of Government initiatives to support and promote lifelong learning for all Tasmanians over the school leaving age. The strategy aims to improve Tasmanians’ work and life skills through the priorities of:

1. literacy and numeracy
2. coordination and information
3. community engagement and participation.

The Adult Learning Strategy included funding of \$4.36 million over four years from 2020-21. A number of strategy actions are supported by TasTAFE, 26TEN (through the 26TEN Communities program), TCAL, Jobs Tasmania, Skills Tasmania, State Growth.

#### **Diagnostic Tools and provision of adult literacy support**

The Panel notes that diagnostic tools should be made more accessible and affordable. While increasing affordability of diagnostic tools is welcomed, **the focus should remain on providing delivery options, supported by a workforce trained on evidence-based approaches, to help adults wanting to lift their literacy skills.** The 26TEN Coalition draws attention to the points raised in the Libraries Tasmania submission for more detail:

“While early intervention is ideal and diagnosis can enable children to access additional educational support, for adults, diagnosis does not necessarily lead to educational support. An adult diagnosis can enable accommodations to be made in workplaces and educational settings, but this is different to providing access to education to improve literacy skills.

For this reason, maintaining a focus on providing delivery options for adults wanting to improve their literacy skills should continue to be the priority over increasing availability of diagnostic assessments.

Assessment of adults entering the Libraries Tasmania Adult Literacy Service highlights learning gaps and helps identify indicators of dyslexic tendencies. This information informs individualised instruction. A research-informed instructional approach will address the needs of those who show indications of dyslexia without the need for a diagnosis. This is why adult literacy practitioner training needs to be based on evidence-based approaches.

Approaches based on the science of reading teach the component skills of reading work for adults who are instructional casualties as well as those who exhibit the most common problems associated with dyslexia.

There is a need to ensure training is accessible and builds practitioner knowledge of best practice instruction – evidence-based, learner-focused, purposeful, authentic and considerate of the barriers that adults face. “ - Libraries Tasmania submission.

### **Support for Adult Prisoners**

As noted by the Panel, Libraries Tasmania delivers an evidence-based adult literacy service in prison, that is highly valued by prisoners. The 26TEN Coalition welcomes improving the link between the prison adult literacy service and literacy services within community to show prisoners where their nearest appropriate service was located as part of their release or prior to release. This could be addressed through more appropriately targeted promotions in prisons. The four 26TEN Community Coordinators have recently met with a Risdon Prison Adult Literacy Coordinator to better understand such opportunities.

### **Workforce Development and National Qualifications – adult years**

26TEN Coalition wishes to reaffirm the points made by the Panel that:

in the adult literacy workforce, ongoing training and supervision is required to maintain quality instruction in literacy skills building.

this training needs to be delivered by highly skilled and trained adult literacy practitioners (**of which there is a shortage**).

26TEN works closely with Libraries Tasmania and TasTAFE to offer a series of professional development workshops each year to practitioners. **Currently there are no nationally agreed qualifications that are readily accessible.**

The Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into the importance of adult literacy (Recommendation 13) states that the Australian Government work with the state and territory governments to develop and implement a national strategy by March 2023, to renew the adult language, literacy, numeracy and digital literacy (LLND) education workforce. The status of this should be explored.

### **Question Two: What are the three main things we should prioritise doing in:**

#### **The Early Years (0-4 years-old)**

#### **PRIORITY ONE: Continue to raise awareness about literacy for parents and carers and its connection in the early and school years.**

26TEN Coalition agrees that programs parents, families and carers access in the early years, should include information about the important role parents, families and carers play in language and literacy development and practical resources should be available to assist them in creating a rich and stimulating environment for literacy development.

This should be complemented by increasingly targeted promotion and raising awareness of the services and supports available to parents across the 26TEN network to improve their reading, writing and maths skills (eg. Libraries Tasmania Adult Literacy Service, 26TEN Communities, Skills for Education and Employment, Foundation Skills for your Future).

As 26TEN's success has shown, literacy programs and campaigns are not 'set and forget', they have to evolve, refresh and the message has to be re-embedded regularly. There is no quick fix. As the Panel notes, to see progress in literacy takes time and continued investment from many stakeholders.

#### **PRIORITY TWO: Strengthen collaboration and referral pathways**

It is not only a matter of time, it is also a case of a multi-pronged approach.

There are a range of organisations providing excellent services across all stages of life literacy. Strengthening the collaboration and understanding the points of interconnection between the services would help to maximise efforts. Beyond this, there are more services and programs that help families with other needs and priorities, so they can fully participate and focus on literacy needs.

26TEN aims to identify opportunities to work in partnership across services including the early childhood education and care sector, playgroups, B4 Coalition, the Department for Education, Children and Young People, Child and Family Learning Centres (CFLCs) and Child Health and Parenting Services (CHaPS). For example, one opportunity includes creating targeted resources for parents and carers with the B4 Coalition.

The aim is to connect efforts of the 26TEN member network so everyone can contribute to the goal of lifting literacy.

The Community-wide Framework will ideally provide the guidelines and support for the organisations to work in a collaborative and coordinated way.

**PRIORITY THREE: Supporting and investing in programs to help parents and carers with their literacy skills**

The 26TEN Coalition sees continuing to help parents and carers with their own literacy skills as a high priority for early and school years. This includes:

1. having **clear referral pathways** for parents and carers, so they can get the support they need to improve their reading, writing and maths skills to support their children's development.
2. **investing in community-based approaches** such as 26TEN Communities where the collective impact approach of working with other service providers, can support and engage parents and carers where they live and work.

**The School Years (5-17 years-old)**

As discussed above in **Question Two - Early Years**.

**The Adult Years (18+ years-old)**

**PRIORITY ONE: Continuing investment and political support of 26TEN and the long-term strategy to lift adult literacy.**

26TEN has been in place for over a decade and it is clear the collective impact approach, where everyone has a role to play (businesses, government, individuals) in lifting adult literacy, is working. Developing the next 10 year strategy is a high priority for 26TEN and the 26TEN Coalition. Continuing investment would include:

1. **Political support and commitment.** Support from all sides of politics is required to lift the profile and importance of the strategy. This could also include a **reinvigorated commitment** for Government agencies to hold literacy awareness sessions and plain English workshops to better understand the complexities of low levels of adult literacy.

2. **Breaking down stigma by boosting funding for adult literacy campaigns.** Increased resourcing for targeted adult literacy campaigns at both the statewide and local levels to reduce stigma and encourage action in different cohorts and sectors.

High level campaigns have achieved success in raising awareness and action, but stigma still remains a significant barrier in some areas. 26TEN commissioned a report by Sally Murfet (InspireAg) in 2020: *Discussion Paper on Agricultural Language, Literacy and Numeracy in Tasmania* which found that stigma continued to be the most significant barrier for people seeking help in this industry.

Campaigns at the local or grass roots level are also needed to reach and support people, who feel shame and stigma about their levels of literacy attainment, to be comfortable getting help in their community. These campaigns are designed to support people to understand the challenges of low literacy and build a supportive environment where people encourage others to get help (community champions), and people who need help feel safe to ask for it. The 26TEN Communities Program, guaranteeing long-term funding, allows the building of trust and understanding within local communities, and time for people to build confidence in themselves as learners and overcome stigma.

3. **Boosting funding 26TEN Employer Grants.** Employer grants are a good example of place-based support to adults that is flexible and tailored to the workplace. The grant program is successful and there is significant interest from businesses. Further funding could allow more employers to receive grants and provide for multi-year grants so that employers can start to embed a culture of learning and literacy support in their workplace. It also allows more time to build these skills given the long-term nature of lifting literacy.
4. **Funding for more 26TEN Communities for place-based literacy support.** This initiative provides long-term funding direct to **four** communities to lift literacy and numeracy skills. It empowers a host organisation to employ a Coordinator to support skills development and run programs. The aim is to work closely with other 26TEN members and compound the investment and momentum in adult literacy.
5. **Investment in adult literacy workforce training and development.** This would increase opportunities for ongoing professional development within the adult literacy workforce. Investment may also need to be higher in regional or remote areas where there may be gaps or challenges in supporting the service. 26TEN recognises the important role that TasTAFE has in providing relevant training and the Tasmanian Council for Adult Literacy (TCAL) as the professional body for adult literacy practitioners. 26TEN works closely with TCAL and TasTAFE to support their activities. These include professional development sessions.
6. **Resourcing and systems to support collective action.** Further resourcing would provide a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to better support and engage with the 26TEN member network to take action and get involved. This may allow 26TEN to efficiently make connections and streamline member efforts in a more coordinated way.

Resourcing and support would also help the 26TEN Coalition with relevant advocacy activities in their sectors (eg health, education, legal, agriculture).

Continuing to **build literacy awareness into education across the sectors** is one opportunity to increase awareness. For example, the University of Tasmania (UTAS) Law Honours

program and the Menzies Institute for Research, have both previously included 26TEN literacy awareness and plain English sessions in the teaching program for students with future careers in health and law. Such initiatives could continue to be explored and expanded for other relevant fields of study with education providers.

**PRIORITY TWO: Continuing investment in place or community-based programs eg. 26TEN Communities, the Libraries Tasmania Adult Literacy Service.**

26TEN is a framework for collective action, there are a number of community-based programs that contribute to the overall [26TEN strategy](#) and goal of lifting adult literacy. Continuing to strengthen investment in the following is key:

- **Funding for 26TEN Communities beyond 2025.** Currently funded under the Adult Learning Strategy to 2025, an extension would meet the original intent of long-term funding. It would also allow new 26TEN Communities to be activated. This would mean more opportunities for grass-roots literacy support where people live and work. Local initiatives also aim to build trust, reduce barriers to participation and build community capacity to make a difference.

To reduce barriers, it is important to ensure there is connection with, and there are referral pathways to allied support services, because before adults can progress their literacy and numeracy skills, they may have some other priorities that need to be addressed at the same time, for example health or financial priorities. Exploring the use of existing resources such as the Right Place and Find Help Tas may support better connection and mapping of these services in a community to provide holistic support to break down barriers to participation

- **Strengthen the statewide Libraries Tasmania Adult Literacy Service.** Libraries Tasmania delivers the free, statewide adult literacy service. This also includes servicing adults who are in prison. Libraries Tasmania is also the implementing agency for the 26TEN Tasmania Strategy with the adult literacy service being a core contribution. Increasing delivery staff in this statewide service in areas of need would increase its impact. Further investment in delivering remote tutoring could also help break down barriers to participation such as travel or stigma.
- Further investment in **26TEN Employer Grants** to allow for more funding to be awarded to more employers, and potential for multi-year grants to embed literacy and learning (as mentioned above under Priority One for the Adult years).

**PRIORITY THREE: Continue investment and development in the adult literacy workforce**

Continued investment in the adult literacy workforce would benefit:

- Adult Literacy Skills Officers (ALSOs) to support 26TEN employer grants,
- 26TEN Community Coordinators to support community based programs,
- Volunteer tutors in the Libraries Tasmania Adult Literacy Service.

Areas for development include:

- **Attracting and recruiting people** to the adult literacy workforce;
- **Removing barriers** to participation (eg. providing remote options for training and learning).
  - 26TEN Employer Grants and 26TEN Communities also present an opportunity to provide more flexible adult literacy support.

- Libraries Tasmania and TasTAFE are currently building a package for remote tutoring online as another tool.
- Providing **clear professional development frameworks** which identifies different levels of training (Accredited eg. Tutor Adult Literacy Learners/ TALL course and non-accredited). There is a need for non-accredited, evidence-based training , that strikes a more appropriate balance so more volunteers are able to be quickly upskilled to increase service delivery and help more people.

**Question Three: Are there any data sets not considered in this paper that should be used to monitor literacy achievement in:**

**The Early Years (0-4 years-old)**

**The School Years (5-17 years-old)**

**The Adult Years (18+ years-old)**

**A mix of data is needed**

The current 26TEN Strategy (2015-25) includes a mix of aspirational goals, quantitative data (including outputs measures) and qualitative data (stories). The 26TEN Coalition agrees that measurement and evaluation of literacy achievement needs to be a mix of:

- **Quantitative measures**, or numbers, using existing and agreed frameworks. For example, the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) is the nationally recognised tool for use in assessing adults' five core skills and measuring their progress. 26TEN uses the Framework to assess participants' progress in its grants program and it is also used in the Libraries Tasmania adult literacy service.
- **Qualitative measures**, or stories and experiences from learners or **achievement of their learning goals or growth in confidence**. This will support and set context of quantitative data. Celebrating stories and giving weight to them, helps to empower learners to tell their experience in their own words and reduce **stigma or shame**.
- **Aspirational targets or high-level goals** that recognise the complex, long-term nature of lifting literacy.

There may be **other relevant measures of positive social impacts** or ripple effects from improved literacy (eg Improved health literacy or financial literacy) that would help complete a full picture. Co-design with host organisations in 26TEN Communities was used to create an evaluation toolkit for the program.

**New National Study on Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Skills**

As noted by the Panel, the Federal Government has withdrawn from the next international PIAAC (Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies). This was critical to measuring adult literacy achievement for Tasmania against the 26TEN Strategy, and levels across Australia.

The Federal Government has tasked the newly formed Jobs and Skills Australia Authority (JSA) to create and deliver a new National Study on Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Skills. The survey will aim to measure the current skills of adults across Australia with a feasibility study to be undertaken to assess and support the skills of First Nations People.

It is unclear whether the survey will be comparable to previous PIAAC data, or if it will provide a large enough sample size for Tasmania to make the data valid or statistically relevant.

A Foundation Skills Advisory Group (FSAG) has also been created to provide advice to JSA about the redesign of relevant foundation skills policies and programs. FSAG brings “together individual experts and representatives from a range of organisations, including foundation skills peak bodies, industry, employers, unions, First Nations people, and state and territory governments”.

#### **Measuring Literacy in Tasmania and Wellbeing**

If the new survey doesn't provide a large enough sample of data for Tasmania, consideration should be given to adequately resourcing the survey at the State level or exploring an alternative measure using existing tools and frameworks.

Literacy could also be included as an indicator under a future Tasmanian Wellbeing Framework. In response to page 12 of the Panel's Final Report and references to wellbeing, 26TEN Coalition would like to raise the following for adults:

- The Productivity Commission released a Working Paper in 2014: *Literacy and Numeracy Skills and Labour Market Outcomes*. The Paper makes clear connection between literacy and wellbeing and how low levels of adult literacy have had a negative impact on adult wellbeing.
- There may be other state adult wellbeing frameworks that could be usefully included.

#### **Question Four: If you are a provider of a service, what kinds of guidance would you hope to see in the Community-wide Framework?**

Over the past decade, 26TEN has set a long-term, collective impact framework for lifting adult literacy. The 26TEN Coalition recommends that a Community-wide Framework should set a direction and vision that we can all collectively work to. 26TEN Coalition would also like to see the Framework provide areas of alignment for any future strategy for 26TEN adult learning / literacy.

The following would be helpful under such a Framework:

- **Clear definitions and shared language.** This will help create a shared understanding and facilitate collective impact. This includes having a shared definition of functional or foundational literacy skills (ie. Reading, writing and maths) which is the building block for other skills and knowledge (eg. digital, financial, health, media and information comprehension).
- **Agreed tools or frameworks for measurement.** As mentioned in this submission, for adult literacy, there are tools available (eg. ACSF). Having agreed tools and frameworks for measurement again provides shared understanding and consistency.
- **Agreed indicators or benchmarks for functional literacy.** Setting clear indicators will provide guidance to service providers and again facilitate collective impact towards shared or common goals.
- **Clear referral pathways** across all stages of life. This would help to better coordinate existing services and organisations across early years, school years and adult years. Consideration should also be given to migrant populations (acknowledging the Federal Government existing supports through SEE and AMEP programs – **see below in Question Five**) and people in prison systems.



- **Reference to complementary frameworks.** For example, linking to any professional learning or workforce development frameworks that exist across early years, school years and adult years.

The 26TEN Coalition recognises the Panel intends to set recommendations for a body of work over a 10 year period. In that way, a Community Wide Framework will need to be a 'living' document with a clearly **identified** owner to keep it current.

#### **Question Five: Are there any other comments you would like to make?**

##### **Support for migrants (SEE and AMEP)**

- 26TEN Coalition recognises the literacy support that the Federal Government, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, (DEWR) provide to migrant and refugee families. This includes the:
  - **Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)** and
  - **the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) Program .**These are delivered in Tasmania by nominated service providers.
- Targeted and appropriate resources and information should continue to be available for migrant and refugee families about the literacy supports available to them and their families and the importance of literacy and learning across all years. Discussions around resources should involve the local nominated providers and DEWR.

##### **Assistive technologies**

- Assistive technologies (AT) can be a useful tool for people with low literacy, allowing them to 'read and write' before they have acquired those skills. AT can also support a literacy learner to build skills. Recently the 26TEN Communities alongside libraries provided Assistive Technology sessions, showing how the technology can be one tool for people to practise reading and spelling (where a person has access to a smart phone). AT also plays a role in 26TEN employer grant projects for example: giving employees the ability and skills to dictate text (speech to text) in their work roles.
- As the Panel notes, these resources should be further explored.

##### **Access to resources and other supports**

- 26TEN Coalition agrees that resources should be freely distributed and the 26TEN Communities are encouraged to share resources across communities where they may have shared benefit.
- Resources should be written in plain English and use images or infographics where appropriate. These resources are useful for those with good literacy skills, but for those with literacy challenge they may not be as accessible. There is still a need for word of mouth, including local community champions who are trusted to support someone to access literacy help.
- 26TEN (the Crown) also has copyright of resources produced during a 26TEN Employer or Community Grant project. These are made freely available under a Creative Commons licence to be re-used in other projects in similar industries for efficiency.

### **Resources: Learning Ecosystems**

The UNESCO website (<https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/learning-ecosystems>) has useful information regarding the **learning ecosystem**. This might be useful when considering a Framework which represents the many interconnections that are needed for success:

“Learning takes place across all ages and in diverse settings, whether in formal education and training institutions, at work or at home. Lifelong learning involves a broad set of knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes through which a learner’s agency is both recognized and fostered. In the age of digital technology and AI, the learning ecosystem is interconnected, employing both online and offline resources to enable learning to take place anywhere, anytime, via individualized pathways.”

The multifaceted, long-term 26TEN strategy reflects some of these principles through its approach and the actions of the 26TEN member network:

- Literacy learning opportunities place the learner and their goals at the centre – whether that be personal or professional.
- 26TEN Communities reflect that co-designing literacy learning opportunities with stakeholders works well when it is place based.
- Literacy learning opportunities (for individuals and groups) are provided where people live and work, with the support of communities and employers. This includes learning happening in different venues (eg. libraries, workplaces, neighbourhood or community houses, child and family learning centres to name a few).