



16 May 2019

Community Colleges Australia
58 Pitt Street, Level 7
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Perlgut,

Thank you for your correspondence to Labor regarding the Community Colleges Australia (CCA) federal election national policy platform.

Labor believes that all Australians should have access through their lives to the education they need for decent jobs and to be active members of the community.

No one should be excluded from access to education as a result of disadvantage, course costs or fear of debt.

Unfortunately, Australia's TAFE and community education system is under enormous pressure as a result of funding cuts, neglect, and poor and incoherent policy development.

The number of students attending TAFE has collapsed due to funding cuts and unhealthy competition from private providers accessing government subsidies. While the decline in government-funded training taking place in community providers has not been as acute, Labor recognises the impact funding uncertainty has on the sector.

The Australian vocational education and training system requires stable, competent and visionary leadership; instead the Liberals have made nine different ministerial appointments with some oversight of vocational education over their six years in office.

In contrast, a Shorten Labor Government will restore public TAFE as the major provider in the vocational education and training system and ensure that not-for-profit community and adult education providers are supported in the critical complementary role they play.

Recognising the role of Adult and Community Education in the Australian education system

Labor also recognises the strong and positive role adult and community learning plays in delivering quality and inclusive post-secondary education to people in our communities, and the important role of the community education sector in delivering services to older Australians, and some of the most disadvantaged segments of Australian society.

You may also be aware that Bill Shorten recently announced a plan to a tax cut for businesses who give older Australian job seekers over the age of 55 employment opportunities, making it easier for small business to create new jobs and help get more older Australians into work.

In Australia today, educational opportunity remains uneven. Too many people miss out on education and too many Australians have language, literacy and numeracy problems that make them vulnerable to underemployment and social exclusion.

Labor wants to change this.

A Shorten Labor Government will break down the barriers that prevent so many Australians from getting the quality education they need.

It is time for a renewed shared commitment by federal and state governments to adult and community education objectives, principles and goals.

The last Ministerial Declaration on Adult Community Education declaration was made under Federal Labor in 2008. Federal Labor has undertaken to provide leadership in ensuring a new declaration.

National funding

Labor will secure funding for vocational education and ensure that at least two thirds of public funding for training will go to TAFE with the remaining one third of funding will be available to high quality providers, including not-for-profit community providers.

For too long the adult and vocational education sectors have been put under intense pressure due to misapplied competition and incoherent policies. Labor is committed to restoring TAFE as the anchor in the vocational education system and the supporting the unique role of not-for-profit Adult Learning and Community Education organisations to Australia's post-secondary education system.

National inquiry into post-secondary education in Australia

Labor has a vision for a stronger, fairer and fit-for-purpose post-secondary education system that meets the needs of our society and economy while helping to deliver fairness, address inequality and ensure equity.

In order to achieve our vision, we must reverse the slow decline that has characterised vocational education and training and adult and community education over the past few years.

In the first 100 days of a Shorten Labor Government we will establish a once-in-a-generation national inquiry into post-secondary education in Australia.

This inquiry will be independent and comprehensive.

We see adult and community education as central this inquiry as we know that we won't be able to deliver it without your expertise, practice and community connection.

Labor believes that if we work together to build a stronger education system, we will be able to meet the opportunities and challenges of the future so that no Australian is left behind.

Labor will ensure a just transition for Australians by making sure everyone can get access to quality education they need throughout their lives.

Labor commits to developing and implementing a national adult literacy strategy, prioritising language, literacy, numeracy and digital learning in the range of contexts in which this is needed.

The Liberals put an end to Labor's longstanding Workplace English Language Literacy and Numeracy program (WELL). After neglecting this area of education and training for six years they have only just proposed to restore a similar program.

Labor will guarantee the funding the Liberals have finally restored for adult language, literacy, numeracy and digital foundation education and will work with adult and community educators to design and implement the program. In addition, Labor has also committed to addressing the problems in the Adult Migrant English and Skills for Education and Employment programs from the Liberals reforms that cut funding, which impacted quality, and lead to a decline in enrolment.

More information about Labor's policies is available [here](#).

Yours sincerely,

Australian Labor Campaign Headquarters

www.alp.org.au

Authorised and printed by N. Carroll, Australian Labor Party, 5/9 Sydney Ave, Barton ACT 2600.