

**Submission
No. 65**

DRIVER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND ROAD SAFETY

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To Members of the Staysafe Committee,

I wish to make the following submission to the current inquiry examining whole-of-life driver education and training.

The Literacy for Life Foundation aims to lift basic literacy levels among adults in Aboriginal communities, so our work is particularly relevant to the inquiry. Since 2012 we have graduated 117 students, achieving completion rates more than four times higher than the equivalent VET/TAFE courses.

To date we have delivered literacy campaigns in seven communities in regional NSW – Bourke, Brewarrina, Boggabilla/Toomelah, Enngonia, Wilcannia, Walgett and Weilmoringle. Our experience in these locations indicates that low literacy among Aboriginal adults is a significant barrier to improving driver education and training for this group.

An estimated 40 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults have minimal English literacy, a figure that rises to as high as 70 per cent in many remote areas.

I will briefly outline some of the related challenges this presents and detail suggested ways forward, using the positive results Literacy for Life Foundation is currently achieving by way of example.

In addition, I would be very pleased to appear before the inquiry to discuss these important matters further.

What we do

Literacy for Life Foundation administers the Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign, delivering significant improvements in rates of adult literacy in remote Indigenous communities. The Campaign is based on the UNESCO-award-winning 'Yes, I Can!' method, which has seen more than 10 million people in 30 countries become literate in the past 15 years.

Target Group

The Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign targets impoverished and marginalised adults aged 15 years and over (including exempted out-of-school youth) with a literacy level at or below Level One on the Australian Core Skills Framework.

This demographic is at a much greater risk of substandard housing, poor health, early mortality, minimal vocational qualifications, long-term unemployment, poverty, domestic and community violence, substance abuse and harm, arrest and incarceration than those with higher literacy.

Their children and grandchildren are also at the greatest risk of poor school attendance, below benchmark performance in literacy and numeracy tests, and of leaving school before Year 12.

The matters before the inquiry are directly relevant to the concerns of this group and their wider community.

In 2016 work was undertaken on a University of New England study funded by the Institute of Criminology, looking at the impact of the literacy campaign on the justice system. During the



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course of the study interviewees identified unlicensed driving as a problem in the local community and pointed out links to low literacy.

This study, and another funded by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), found that a significant benefit from Literacy for Life's campaign in those communities was an increase in the number of previously unlicensed drivers who had been able to get permits and/or licenses. This was achieved through the campaign building participants' confidence and literacy skills, assisting them to work off unpaid fines through Work Development Orders and connecting them with other agencies providing driver training, for example Birrang.

Members of the Committee can see the impact of this work for themselves, as SBS Insight recorded a short clip with one of our students in 2016, in which she outlined how improving her literacy had helped her work towards achieving a license.

Link: <https://youtu.be/jdVBPQbPYLQ> (YouTube)

Bridging a gap

The Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign's success relies on its non-accredited, informal community development approach, which empowers communities to take control of delivery from the outset. This is not possible for accredited formal courses provided by Registered Training Organisations ("RTOs"), which helps explain their high attrition rates.

It is my belief that any initiatives aimed at improving driver training and education as they relate to rural and remote Aboriginal communities will struggle to generate any gains while literacy levels remain so low.

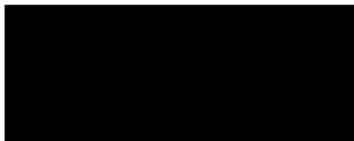
What works

The Literacy for Life Foundation's results illustrate a path to improvement. We have had significant, positive results working with groups that are some of the most in need of access to driver education and training.

Indeed we have already incorporated some driver education and training into our campaigns and would welcome any opportunity to explore this further.

I am happy to appear before the inquiry in person if members of the committee would like to discuss these matters in more depth. I look forward to hearing from you and wish you well in your important work.

Yours Sincerely



Jack Beetson
Executive Director
Literacy for Life Foundation

