It is with pleasure that I am responding on behalf of the Queensland Council for Adult Literacy to the *Expert review of Australia's vocational education and training system*.

Our submission will address the issue of literacy and numeracy within VET programs and there is an emphasis on Terms 6 with a brief response to Term 7.

**Term 6: Whether additional support is needed for vulnerable cohorts, including those currently unemployed and at risk of unemployment, or those with low literacy and numeracy skills.**

Australian Government program funding and for related administrative arrangements for the SEE initiative and its predecessors have been welcomed by the adult literacy field and this need continues. Thus, QCAL strongly supports its recurrent funding.

QCAL has also welcomed the ratification of, funding for, and recent review of the Foundation Skills Training Package. However, while this program has value, it does not represent the needs of a range of literacy and numeracy knowledges and skills across the Australian population. Indeed, in the last decade the need for community, workplace and general vocational literacy support programs has neither been recognised nor met. Thus, a VET review such as this one should be concerned about this lack of provision and make recommendations for these specific areas to be examined and addressed.

A third initiative that is valuable is the Reading, Writing Hotline. This service allows the general public to find local provision and it is staffed by professional adult literacy and numeracy staff who are in a good position to provide relevant advice.

As well as catering more adequately to the needs of potential adult literacy and numeracy students, there is also an urgent need to improve the quality of VET teaching with respect to literacy and numeracy. While the inclusion of units relating to adult literacy and numeracy in the Certification IV in Training and Assessment have been productive, there is a need for general vocational teachers to understand the literacy and numeracy features of their occupational texts so that these can be taught to students. Work on topics such as disciplinary literacy would be of assistance in this regard.

There is also a dire need to fund programs that develop the knowledge and skills of specialist adult literacy and numeracy teachers in innovative ways. In the past, universities employed highly-qualified specialists to do this work and, more recently, VET trainers filled this role through the Graduate Diploma in Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy (TAE80113). A small number of places in the latter program was funded. However, this support has now ceased. A concerted effort is needed, first, to value more highly and encourage the work of AL teachers within the VET space and, second, to require that these support staff be high-skilled and to make such programs available to them at a reasonable cost.

**Term 7: Seek out case studies of best practice in VET, and consider whether specific trials should be undertaken to test innovative approaches likely to deliver better outcomes**
There are case studies available that provide models of good practice in adult literacy and numeracy across the range of VET provision. These need to be reviewed and those that seem relevant need to be funded appropriately. In addition, because it is now almost thirty years since 1990, International Literacy Year, when diverse initiatives were implemented in the adult literacy and numeracy field, it is time for a new policy in this field to be developed and new strategies and innovative responses to new needs be developed and implemented.

Dr Ann Kelly

(President, QCAL)

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