

26TEN: Tasmania's strategy for adult literacy and numeracy 2016–2025

2021 Annual Progress Report



Building skills for wellbeing, resilience and prosperity

Literacy and numeracy are fundamental to our quality of life and ability to live, learn, work, and participate in our communities. For 26TEN, this was never more evident than in 2021, with ongoing disruption from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tasmanians were again challenged by the increased need to understand health information, to support their children with learning, to apply for government services, and to continue working. Many of these activities happened online on computers or on mobile phones, adding to the level of complexity. At work, advances in technology, new procedures and additional safety requirements also highlighted the need for stronger skills.

The pandemic also exposed unmet needs in other skills, including digital, media, health, financial and information literacies. Literacy and numeracy are the foundation for these literacies and vital for building wellbeing, resilience and prosperity in all aspects of our lives.

The 26TEN team in Libraries Tasmania and members of the 26TEN Network across the state adapted programs to suit the new environment.

We provided more tools online and returned to face-to-face delivery when it was safe to do so. We supported health professionals, educators and others to use plain English to make it easier for Tasmanians to understand information.

Importantly, we began implementing recommendations from the [26TEN Tasmania Strategy](#), outlined in [26TEN in 2020](#). This included the place-based program *26TEN Communities: Local Literacy for Work and Life*, funded through the Tasmanian Government's *Adult Learning Strategy*. The program will increase the availability of literacy and numeracy support for people where they work and live. The longer-term investment in communities made possible through the program will enable the consistent effort required to embed a culture of life-long learning.

This Report sets out the progress made in 2021 towards the three goals set in the 26TEN Tasmania Strategy:

- » Everyone knows about adult literacy and numeracy
- » Everyone is supported to improve their skills and help others
- » Everyone communicates clearly.

2021 snapshot

Four new 26TEN communities were established, the first to be funded under the new Program, *26TEN Communities: Local Literacy for Work and Life*.

Each community successfully recruited a coordinator, who began engaging with adult learners, service providers, local businesses and not-for-profit organisations.

In 2021, 93 new members and supporters joined the Network, taking the total number of organisations and individuals contributing to the collective effort to raise literacy and numeracy in Tasmania to 1108. 26TEN continued to support members and supporters to help adults to raise their literacy and numeracy skills in a range of ways appropriate to their circumstances.

26TEN ran 29 Literacy Awareness workshops around Tasmania. This was 12 more than in 2020, showing that communities were recovering from the impact of COVID-19. Workshops included organisations around the State, such as the Cancer Council, Rotary, Clarendon Vale Neighbourhood house and first-year medical students at UTAS.

Over 460 people took part in 26TEN Plain English workshops. By including online and COVID safe, face-to-face workshops we returned to the pre-pandemic number of participants.

For Plain English month in May, 26TEN worked with plain English specialist, Lea McInerney, to develop a free, forty-five minute plain English webinar and worksheets, titled: [How to write clearer emails](#). This was a practical way of providing training during the pandemic that allowed people to learn individually or in small groups.

26TEN advocated for Australian Government focus on adult literacy, with the 26TEN Coalition making a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Adult Literacy and its Importance. 26TEN also provided input to the work of the Tasmanian Government Literacy Advisory Panel.

4



communities

were awarded longer-term funding to facilitate change that is local and lasting under **26TEN Communities: Local Literacy for Work and Life**

93



members and supporters

joined 26TEN bringing the total to ...

1108

organisations and individuals

taking action

460+



people

learned about plain English

360+

people

completed literacy awareness training

GOAL ONE

Everyone knows about adult literacy

Awareness of the importance of adult literacy continues to be a priority for 26TEN. Tasmania cannot afford to miss out on the talent of our people and we cannot afford to ignore that people who struggle with reading, writing and maths skills are all too easily left behind.

By increasing understanding of the complex issues around adult literacy and the impact on individuals, businesses and communities, 26TEN continues to motivate more people to seek help and to offer it.

In April 2021, 26TEN conducted its fifth annual survey since 2015. As in previous surveys, reading was considered to be the primary daily challenge faced by adults with low literacy and numeracy. The survey showed that community awareness has remained the same over the last two years, indicating the importance of ongoing campaigns on adult literacy and numeracy, to raise and sustain awareness.

Understanding literacy in Tasmania — the literacy awareness workshop

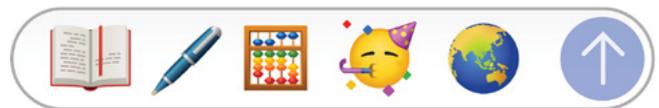
When people participate in a 26TEN literacy awareness workshop, they learn why many adults have unmet literacy needs, how this affects their opportunities and the impact on society as a whole. The one-hour workshops are free and interactive.

In 2021, we ran 29 Literacy Awareness workshops, 12 more than in 2020. We spoke with over 360 people in organisations around the State, such as the Cancer Council, Rotary, Clarendon Vale Neighbourhood House and first-year medical students at UTAS.

Successful Emoji Campaign run again

In light of the success in 2020 of the Emoji Campaign targeting young Tasmanians, 26TEN ran it again in September 2021. The campaign uses emojis in a direct and fun way to invite people to take action to change their world through improving their literacy and numeracy skills.

The campaign targeted adults aged between 18 and 30 via web and social media channels, and reached about 170 000 Tasmanians. SnapChat, used for the first time in 2021, was a valuable addition to the social media suite, receiving the most engagement when compared to Facebook and Instagram. The emoji campaign was also used to target a more traditional market with Community Service Announcements broadcast on Channel Seven.



Advocacy

In 2021, 26TEN advocated for increased action on adult literacy and numeracy. We provided information to the Tasmanian Government Literacy Advisory Panel, highlighting the collective impact approach that allows everyone — government, business, communities and individuals, to make an appropriate contribution. We also spoke about removing barriers such as stigma, access to childcare and transport, and time off from work, so that adults can get the help they need, when and where they need it.

The 26TEN Coalition also made these points in a submission to the Australian Parliamentary Inquiry into Adult Literacy and its Importance. This submission argued for an Australian Government commitment to gathering good data to help inform Australia's response to the adult literacy challenge, through full participation in the OECD's Program of International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC).

26TEN Address to Australia Parliamentary Inquiry

26TEN Convenor, **Siobhan Gaskell**, spoke to the National Parliamentary Inquiry about adult literacy and nominated five areas for action if Australia is to seriously tackle adult literacy:

"I think literacy and numeracy are fundamental to our social and economic recovery, particularly after this COVID experience, where we have even more people flung into the world of technology and the base-literacy skills to participate aren't there. It's not just about work. It's about happy lives.

It's about having the life skills so that every adult can safely read a medicine packet to give their child the correct dosage, so they can access services when they experience a life event, so they can make an informed vote, so they can read to their children and help them to do well at school, so they can actively participate in their local community and so they can find information and make informed decisions—all of these things scattered across health, social justice, democracy, intergenerational poverty and mental health.



1. Elevate literacy to a national level

I would appeal to the Australian Government to look at this as a national issue.

It should involve the three tiers of government, business, industry, and community—a collective across all of these portfolios and areas working together. It should be treated in the way we've seen domestic violence and mental health treated more recently, being elevated nationally into things that people do talk about. It's about reducing stigma. It's about building the confidence of individuals and the community as a whole to confront this issue, and everyone can play a part.

2. Apply a local place-based approach

In our experience, a local place-based approach is what works best, particularly in rural and regional Australia, but also across the board. Through our 26TEN communities, we've found that a model built upon volunteers, paid professionals, peer mentoring and volunteer non-accredited learning has made significant impacts, and part of that is because of the relationship between the individual that's seeking support and their volunteer tutor. It is critical in building self-esteem and confidence as part of that process.

3. Communicate clearly using plain English and easy English

Time and again, we hear from people about issues with access, particularly to government services. Many people struggle to use Services Australia and myGov, yet these things are critical to them throughout their lives. I think that whole area of clear communication is fundamentally critical, and again I would ask that we mandate the use of plain and easy English to help all Australian citizens to actually participate in their society.

4. Invest in data collection and research

The OECD runs an assessment across all of its member countries around the adult competencies in this area. We've used that data from the start of our program, with the 2011 survey. We've set an aspirational target of a 10 per cent increase in literacy and numeracy skills in Tasmania. The Tasmanian sample was reduced from 625 participants in 2011 to 107 in 2022, so that erodes the data base that we use to measure our progress.

5. Build the adult literacy workforce

We work with paid practitioners in this area, but also volunteer literacy tutors are fundamental to our model. We think that whole area of encouraging people to help in this program is really critical. As I'm sure you're all aware, for somebody to actually put their hand up as an adult to seek help is a really huge step. If you haven't got that resource to support them straight off—and comfortably—then you may well lose them pretty quickly.”

– Siobhan Gaskell, Convenor 26TEN Coalition

News stories and media

Tasmanian submissions to the Australian Parliamentary Inquiry, including those from Rural Business Tasmania, Libraries Tasmania, Tasmanian Council for Adult Literacy, Tasmanian 100 per cent Literacy Alliance and 26TEN, prompted strong media coverage of literacy issues. The submissions were quoted by the major news outlets including the ABC, The Mercury, The Advocate, The Examiner and The Australian.

Community radio station and 26TEN member, RPH Print Radio, continued to support the 26TEN goal of increased awareness in 2021, broadcasting six interviews with 26TEN Coalition members and others in the 26TEN Network.

26TEN Week – Small steps, big changes

26TEN week from 25 to 29 October highlighted the power of adult literacy with the theme ‘Small steps, big changes’. 26TEN materials were used by members and communities to run activities that best suited their needs.

Activities included:

- » Free one-day workshops for people interested in volunteering to tutor adult literacy learners run by TasTAFE, Skills Tasmania and Libraries Tasmania in Rosny, Huonville and Glenorchy Libraries. The workshop gave an overview of literacy needs in Tasmania, the building blocks people need to achieve functional literacy and the attributes needed to be an effective tutor.
- » Drop in sessions at the Starting Point Neighbourhood House and Northern Suburbs Community Centre in Launceston.
- » Plain English workshops at the Migrant Resource Centre, Clarendon Primary School, and libraries around the state.
- » An event for adult literacy practitioners, titled ‘Progressive Practices: adapting to change’ hosted by Tasmanian Council for Adult Literacy. Gail Eaton-Briggs spoke on behalf of the 26TEN Coalition.
- » A Government House Reception, where members of the new 26TEN Communities members met each other, the 26TEN Team and Coalition, and Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC, Governor of Tasmania.

▼ Hayley, Taylor and Brad with Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC





▲ Daryl Quilliam, Chair, 26TEN Coalition at the Local Government Association of Tasmania conference 2021

The 26TEN Coalition motivates action

Members of the 26TEN Coalition continued to volunteer their time to motivate a range of sectors in Tasmania to lift adult literacy. Sectors included: health, education, community, legal, agriculture, aged care, disability, local and state government, and vocational education and training.



My Story – Shannon, 29 years old

I struggled early on in life. Being born premature at 27 weeks just weighing 530 grams and then dropping to 480 grams. I had suffered a brain haemorrhage.

I was the 5th smallest baby born in Queensland, Australia at the time that did not have physical or substantial intellectual disabilities. I do however have a learning disability which made it hard for me at school. I struggled a lot with learning throughout my life and eventually put my learning on the back burner. It became too hard, I just couldn't understand some of the basic maths and English. I only knew little maths and some English, I had a teacher call me dumb and said I wasn't a pleasure to work with or help. Any confidence I had was gone. I became withdrawn from school and thought I must just be dumb.

Later on in life I came to the conclusion that I would just have to continue as I had been.

I started volunteering at the Clarence Plains Child and Family Centre which is where I heard about the 26TEN program. I have been asked to become a community champion leader for the program. I decided to give learning another go and signed up. Through the program I've gained more skills and more confidence with my maths and English. I've also learnt that with the right support it's possible to learn again.

GOAL TWO

Everyone is supported to improve their skills and help others

26TEN members continued to support adult Tasmanians to improve their literacy skills, in training organisations, community centres, businesses and libraries across the state.

The Libraries Tasmania literacy service supported 547 adults, despite COVID restrictions. TasTAFE continued to build its capacity to support students with low literacy. Over 160 Tasmanians enrolled in its free course titled, Tutor Adult Literacy Learners, building capacity.

Building literacy through collaboration at the local level

In late 2020, with funding provided through the new *Tasmania Adult Learning Strategy*, 26TEN established a new Program, *26TEN Communities: Local Literacy for Work and Life*. Building on the earlier 26TEN community grants program, which this program has replaced, and informed by recommendations made in the *26TEN in 2020* report, the Program offers longer-term funding at the local level.

▼ *First meeting of the four 26TEN Communities*



This sustained engagement will make a long-lasting difference to attitudes to learning and skills. It gives local organisations and residents the resources and funding to develop practical literacy and numeracy solutions, tailored to the needs of their community. This approach of using collective action at the local level is aimed at improving literacy and numeracy skills, where they are needed, over four to five years.

A 26TEN Communities Coordinator was recruited to the 26TEN Team to implement the Program.

After an assessment of applications from communities, the first four new communities were granted initial funding in 2021 to recruit a local Community Coordinator. The Coordinator is responsible for raising awareness of available adult literacy and numeracy support in their local areas among residents, workers, community organisations and local businesses, with their priority being to lift adult literacy and numeracy skills.

Each community has a steering committee that includes people from the private, public and community sectors. This ensures there is strong representation from local people who can share knowledge, work together and lift the profile of 26TEN.

The 26TEN Team began working collaboratively with communities to develop a consistent and practical methodology for assessing the impact of the program. This process of co-design will be finished in 2022.

The first four communities and their host organisations are:

- » Building a 26TEN Community, Glenorchy City Council
- » Parents, Families and Carers — Learning for our Kids: a 26TEN Community Project, Hobart City Mission, Clarence Plains
- » Connecting with Literacy across Launceston Northern Suburbs — 26TEN Community Hub, Starting Point Neighbourhood House, Ravenswood and Northern Suburbs Community House
- » Huon 26TEN Community, Geeveston Community Centre.

26TEN Employer grants awarded to sectors where skills are in high demand

The impact of COVID-19, increased use of technology, global competition and other challenges have reinforced the need for Tasmanian businesses to improve their adaptability and resilience. 26TEN Employer grants support businesses to do this by improving reading, writing and maths skills in their employees.

Learning is tailored to the needs of each employee and their role in the organisation. For example, Glenorchy City Council Works Centre completed their grant project aimed at supporting employees to improve their reading, writing and digital skills to use new systems at work.



▲ *The Glenorchy Works team shows their support for 26TEN*

In 2021, new recipients came from around the State and a range of sectors that reflected areas of high workforce demand, including aged care, disability and childcare.

In the food production sector, Forager Foods, a Tasmanian, family-owned company, received their second grant. This built on their successful 2020 project, providing skills to staff as the business and workforce expanded across two new sites.

Successful recipients for the 2020-21 grants were:

- » Tastex Knitwear (with Work & Training)
- » Self Help Workplace (with Work & Training)
- » OneCare Umina Park (with TasTAFE)
- » Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation
- » Adventure Patch/Work and Training
- » OneCare Barossa Park Lodge (with TasTAFE)
- » Migrant Resource Centre (Southern Tasmania) Inc.
- » Forager Foods (with TasTAFE)
- » Southern Cross Care Inc. North West
- » The Story Island Project
- » Disability Employment Services / Work and Training (second year project)
- » Glenhaven Family Care.

Building literacy and numeracy in Chigwell with a 26TEN Employer Grant

Three organisations in Chigwell: Bucaan House, the Child and Family Learning Centre and Mission Australia, used their employer grant funding to build literacy and numeracy skills in 2021.

The organisations ran a cooking program for their volunteers and employees. Participants selected and read recipes, planned menus and gained understanding of the numeracy involved in cooking. They also took home groceries to practise what they had learned.

The project improved cooking, nutrition, literacy and numeracy skills in the participants at the Child and Family Learning Centre. They were better able to follow recipes and noticeably increased their vocabulary around numeracy.

For example, one participant said, “I feel better about understanding the measuring cups now”. Another improved her language around fractions saying things such as “a quarter” instead of “a fourth”. One participant went from having almost three meals a week delivered to showing photos of the meals she had been cooking. The participant said she had followed the recipes she had worked on and had built the confidence to alter them to her family’s tastes.

Two Mission Australia participants gained job interviews and were offered work. Other feedback about the program was that it was a motivating force when having dark days.

At Bucaan House, strong relationships developed between the garden volunteers who worked with the new garden project manager to improve the presentation of information both for and from the volunteers. They also increased their understanding of the services that 26TEN provides.

▼ *Cooking in the kitchen*



26TEN Members

The number of member organisations of the 26TEN Network continues to grow. In the last 12 months, 28 new organisations joined 26TEN, with only one organisation leaving the network.

The Kate Warner, AC, Literacy Volunteer Bursary

26TEN continued to benefit from the thoughtful, generous and active support of now retired Governor, Kate Warner AC. In recognition of her contribution, 26TEN now offers a bursary in her name of an amount of up to \$1000 for professional development for a volunteer involved with adult literacy.

The first recipient of the Bursary was Maria Flynn, an adult literacy volunteer in Community Corrections at the Department of Justice. As part of the bursary Maria completed the Smart Spelling workshop and had afternoon tea with Kate Warner when she was still Governor.



▲ Sue Costello, Manager 26TEN, and Richard Warner, 26TEN Coalition member, Kate Warner and Maria Flynn at Government House

Recruiting adult literacy and numeracy practitioners for workplace projects

26TEN addressed a decline in the workforce of qualified and experienced adult literacy and numeracy practitioners by recruiting and training new Adult Literacy Skills Officers. Officers have a specialised skill set that enables them to work with recipients of 26TEN Employer Grants. They need to be able to understand an organisation's business needs, the needs of the employees and the skills needed by the employees to do their jobs. The officer tailors learning to meet those needs.

Because it is a specialised field we provide training for teachers who are interested in this work. New ALSOs can shadow experienced practitioners and work with a mentor on their first project.

Building skills in adult literacy volunteers

Tasmanians need practical, tailored help to improve their literacy. TasTAFE continued to help meet 26TEN goals by training adult literacy volunteers who can provide that help. Over 160 Tasmanians enrolled in free tutor training made available online by TasTAFE in 2021.

Through the Tutor Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skill Set (TALL), participants learnt how to support adults to achieve their literacy and numeracy goals. The ten-week course covers how adults learn, the barriers that make learning difficult for some, how to identify individual learner needs, and how to plan and monitor learning activities to suit those needs.

In late 2021, TasTAFE also introduced a new one-day taster workshop, initially held in seven locations around Tasmania. Forty-two people attended the sessions to find out more about the role of the adult volunteer tutor and the TALL course.

GOAL THREE

Everyone communicates clearly

Making plain English the communication style of choice in Tasmania

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant people with low literacy are at even higher risk of being excluded from society, with increased demands to get online, read health information and support their children's education. This has shone a light on the obligation for all levels of government and other service providers to ensure plain English is always used and communication is clear.

In 2021, 26TEN was able to double the number of plain English workshops offered and triple participation in comparison to 2020.

Libraries Tasmania contributed by hosting workshops in libraries around the state, increasing the number of workshops offered to the public. The high level of interest from the public means this will continue in 2022.

Other organisations that hosted workshops included Derwent Eye Specialists, the Integrity Commission, TasNetworks, UTAS medical and law schools, local councils and government agencies.

▼ Promoting 26TEN — Team member, Kate Boatwright



Highlighting plain English in May

Each year, 26TEN highlights plain English for a month, holding activities around the State to improve written communication skills.

In 2021, two half-day public plain English workshops were delivered to participants at the Devonport and Hobart libraries. Both were fully booked and attended by a diverse group from the area. 26TEN also held workshops with the Glenorchy City Council and the Integrity Commission.

Plain English specialist, Lea McInerney, presented a live lunchtime webinar, *Write clearer emails using one simple plain English technique*. Nearly 50 people attended. The session was widely promoted by the 26TEN Network including, The Law Society, the Local Government Association of Tasmania, the Reading Writing Hotline and the Department of Education.

Plain English trainers attended a breakfast where they reviewed the way we evaluate 26TEN workshops. They also discussed the new Australian Government Style Manual and how to use inclusive language when communicating clearly.

The [Information Access Group](#) presented three Easy English workshops, hosted by the Health Literacy Network and the Aged Care Assessment Team from the Tasmanian Health Service, introducing a form of communication that uses images to support the text, large font and plenty of blank space. 26TEN member organisations from the disability and aged-care sector attended these workshops in Hobart and Launceston.

▼ *Natasha Brewer takes a free Plain English workshop in Devonport*



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