# Consultation Paper

## Tasmania’s next Adult Literacy Strategy



# Introduction

Low levels of adult literacy and numeracy across Tasmania, and the reasons for this are well known. It is also recognised, including by the Government’s Literacy Advisory Panel, that a collective impact approach, along with a long-term commitment is required to lift adult literacy skills.

Since 2012, Tasmania has been leading the nation in its approach to improving adult literacy, with tri-partisan political support and a whole-of-community approach to lifting adult literacy rates through 26Ten.

Under its first ten-year strategy, *26TEN Tasmania: Tasmania’s Strategy for Adult Literacy and Numeracy: 2016 - 2025* (the Strategy), the 26Ten network of member organisations and individuals, committed to improving adult literacy rates across Tasmania, has had many successes. We have strengthened the understanding of the adult literacy environment in Tasmania.

On the strength of these successes, and in response to the recommendations of the Lifting Literacy report, the [*Lifting Literacy Implementation Plans 2024-2026*](https://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0027/297711/Final-Report-to-Government-Literacy-Advisory-Panel.pdf)of theDepartment of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) and the Department of Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) commit to development of a new strategy to guide a statewide commitment to adult literacy beyond the current 26Ten strategy*.*

With the current strategy finishing at the end of 2025, it is timely to consider where we’ve come from, what we’ve achieved, what we’ve learned and where to next.

You are invited to contribute your thoughts and experiences to help inform the development of the adult literacy strategy beyond 2025.

The consultation paper provides guiding questions at the end of each section and a summary of guiding questions at the end of the paper that you may like to use to form your responses.

# Where we’ve come from

Since 2012, 26Ten has been an innovative statewide approach to engage individuals and communities to discuss adult literacy needs, to build literacy support services and to engage in those services at an individual, workplace or community level.

The Strategy uses a collective impact approach with three high-level goals, to which government, business, community groups and individuals can make a contribution. They are:

* everyone knows about adult literacy and numeracy
* everyone is supported to improve their literacy and to help others
* everyone communicates clearly.

The Strategy has been based on uniting government, business, community and individuals behind these common goals to contribute whatever they can towards a statewide effort to raise adult literacy and numeracy.

A key element has been the 26Ten network of individual supporters and member organisations, each committed to an action plan outlining how they will actively support adult literacy in their workplaces and their communities. 26Ten membership has grown to 260 organisations and more than 1100 individuals, since the launch of the Strategy in 2016.

The 26Ten Coalition, whose influential volunteer members bring knowledge of specific industry sectors and their unique literacy needs, has helped develop the 26Ten network by advocating for 26Ten in their respective sectors. The sector action plans of Coalition members have helped shape the support offered to adult literacy through 26Ten. The Coalition has also provided advice to successive Ministers on adult literacy needs and advocated for ongoing Government support.

Successive Tasmanian governments have provided funding to support the implementation of the Strategy. This has enabled:

* employment of a small team of people in Libraries Tasmania to administer, coordinate and enable statewide contributions to 26Ten goals, provide direct support to 26Ten member organisations and the 26Ten Coalition, and deliver policy advice and reporting as the implementing agency of Government
* workplace grants to help employers increase employee literacy in the workplace
* the 26Ten Communities Program, which provides funding to five communities to employ a 26Ten Coordinator to:
	+ develop an understanding of the communities they serve
	+ identify literacy and numeracy support services, and
	+ foster engagement in those services.
* Targeted literacy awareness workshops to raise awareness of the need and help available for those with low literacy
* training in plain English to remove barriers for adults with low literacy
* a program of professional development for adult literacy practitioners
* a hotline for adults seeking literacy support which directs learners to the Libraries Tasmania adult literacy service, offering free one-to-one adult literacy support through libraries around the state
* a website targeting those who wish to be involved
* maintenance and development of the 26Ten brand and logo, a newsletter and communication campaigns.

# What’s been achieved

The Strategy uses data and storytelling to measure achievements.

The Strategy set population level targets for a 10 per cent increase in literacy and numeracy levels, using a baseline established by the 2011 OECD Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). These were aspirational and have proven challenging to measure, given the Australian Government’s withdrawal from the 2022 PIAAC process.

The progress of many individual learners, however, has been measured through the Libraries Tasmania adult literacy service using the Australian Core Skills Framework, with many learners making measurable literacy gains and achieving their learning goals.

Learner stories are also captured to put a human face to the progress and to demonstrate the broader impact of the strategy beyond just the numerical improvements.

There have been many achievements over the past nine years of the Strategy. These include:

* A network of more than 260 organisations and 1100 individuals taking action to improve adult literacy in Tasmania in their communities and/or workplaces.
* An active Coalition that has worked in industry sectors to raise awareness of the need and to connect people with low literacy to support services.
* Funding for five communities to develop a community-wide approach to improving adult literacy by connecting people to services.
* Delivering plain English workshops to develop people’s skills to write clearly and concisely without using jargon.
* Providing over 90 workplace grants to employers to address specific literacy and numeracy needs of in their workforce.

In 2018-19, 26Ten commissioned an impact assessment of Tasmania’s investment in adult literacy and numeracy. The assessment found that for every dollar invested, at least $5.20 in benefits were returned to the community. These included:

* benefits to employers and employees who improved their reading, writing and maths skills,
* better jobs prospects
* employees gaining higher-level jobs and
* civic benefits such as improved quality of life of individuals and families, better health outcomes and increased participation in community life.

# What we’ve learnt

**Guiding questions**

* What elements of the first 26Ten strategy have been most effective?
* What aspects of the 26Ten approach have been most useful in supporting you or your organisation to contribute to the collective effort to raise literacy?
* What are the gaps and what can be improved?
* Who is not being helped to build their skills?

Since 2012, 26Ten has captured data and stories to better understand the adult literacy environment in Tasmania. The key things we’ve learnt are that:

* Better reading, writing and maths skills among a population are the foundation for a healthier, more prosperous community. Better skills make our workplaces safer and more productive, increase participation and wellbeing in our communities and promote social inclusion.
* The adult literacy landscape is complex. There are many people across Tasmania with low levels of literacy and many who are reluctant to address this. Regardless of the support available to them, stigma remains a barrier to improving literacy skills.
* Tasmania faces challenges due to its diverse and dispersed population, which includes a high percentage of residents in remote areas and those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.
* A collective impact approach is needed to improve literacy and numeracy levels in Tasmania. This includes government, industry and community coming together to understand the need, to commit to action and to support those with low literacy to improve their skills.
* What works in one community, or one workplace, may not work in another. An approach that tailors learning to the specific needs of individuals is required.
* Lifting literacy rates across Tasmania requires a long-term commitment, government investment and appropriately qualified staff to support learners.
* People are increasingly asking for help with digital literacy because they need to access government and other essential services online.

# Where we are now

**Guiding questions**

* What are the key lessons you have learned through your involvement with adult literacy in Tasmania?

As we near the end of the current ten-year strategy for adult literacy, we need to consider how to best support adult literacy beyond 2025.

The Tasmanian Government has committed, through a community -wide approach, to improving literacy attainment in Tasmania.

The DPAC *Lifting Literacy Implementation Plan 2024-2026* sets the goal of:

* *Lifting Literacy so that all Tasmanians can benefit from the social and economic benefits of literacy*

It establishes the following overarching principles:

* **Equity** – all Tasmanians have opportunities to access the support they need to develop literacy skills
* **Consistency** – there is evidence-based structured (systematic and explicitly) literacy teaching from early years to adulthood
* **Individual at the Centre** - Educators put their learners at the centre by understanding and responding to the ecological contexts of those they teach
* **Evidence-based research** – Approaches to teaching literacy are underpinned by the large body of cognitive research on how our brain learns to read and write.

The *Lifting Literacy Implementation Plan 2024-2026* of the DECYP:

* Delivering on the final two years of *26Ten Tasmania: Tasmania’s Strategy for Adult Literacy and Numeracy* (Action 16); and
* Develop a strategy for community-wide adult literacy support and engagement beyond the current 26TEN strategy 2016-2025, to renew a collective impact approach consistent with the Lifting Literacy Framework (Action 17).

DECYP has also committed in this plan to strengthening and expanding the reach of the Libraries Tasmania adult literacy service, developing a single portal for literacy resources and developing a community-wide campaign to promote the importance of literacy.

Progress against the DPAC and DECYP implementation plans is being monitored by the independent Lifting Literacy Outcomes Monitoring Group, established by the Premier in December 2024, with the objective of ensuring these commitments are met in full.

In this context, the opportunity exists to draw on the experience of the past 12 years of 26Ten, and international best practice in adult literacy, to consider how we can continue to collectively support increased literacy skills for adult Tasmanians over the next ten years.

# What do you think?

**Guiding questions**

* What do you think success looks like in the Adult Literacy Sector?
* What data do you currently collect that would contribute to measuring success?
* Can you suggest ways to improve data collection for adult literacy outcomes?
* What aspects of literacy should be included in the new strategy?
* Is there anything else you would like to add?

In summary, we are seeking your input and feedback to inform the development of the next Adult Literacy Strategy, beyond 2025. A consolidated list of guiding questions is detailed below:

1. What elements of the first 26Ten strategy have been most effective?
2. What aspects of the 26Ten approach have been most useful in supporting you or your organisation to contribute to the collective effort to raise literacy?
3. What are the gaps and what can be improved?
4. Who is not being helped to build their skills?
5. What are the key lessons you have learned through your involvement with adult literacy in Tasmania?
6. What do you think success looks like in the Adult Literacy Sector?
7. What data do you currently collect that would contribute to measuring success?
8. Can you suggest ways to improve data collection for adult literacy outcomes?
9. What aspects of literacy should be included in the new strategy?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add?

You are invited to contribute your thoughts and experiences on adult literacy in Tasmania by:

* Providing a formal response to all the guiding questions in this paper
* Providing a formal response to select guiding questions in this paper
* Completing an online survey.

# Submitting a response

The consultation is open until Thursday 17 April 2025.

To submit a formal response to this consultation paper visit [26Ten.tas.gov.au](https://26ten.tas.gov.au/i-want-to-help/alsc/)