

## Briefing for the Incoming Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment

Cc Associate Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment  
cc Minister of Education

ACE Aotearoa- Adult and Community Education Aotearoa

February 2017

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### **Introduction-**

Adult and Community Education (ACE) Aotearoa Incorporated is the national lead body for adult and community educators and a voice for adult learners, and is a registered charity (CC31474) with a constitutional responsibility to serve all learners, providers and practitioners across the ACE Sector.

The ACE Sector promotes the value of engaging in structured knowledge and skill improvement throughout life as a means of enhancing individual and community well-being with positive social and economic benefits. Funding comes from a broad mix of individual and government purchase and philanthropic support with services tailored to local and individual learner needs.

ACE Aotearoa is focused on learners with previous low or no success in their educational experience. Those learners have been shown to be associated with increased costs to the taxpayer (in terms of welfare, health and justice) once they enter adult society.

The Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) 2014-2019 recognises ACE as an integral part of the tertiary education system. The ACE sector contributes to all of the TES priorities with priority 4 directly targeting adult literacy and numeracy.

Over the past decade, ACE Aotearoa has worked in partnership with government (through contracts with the Tertiary Education Commission and support from the Ministry of Education) to facilitate effective service provision to ACE learners, support policy initiatives and improve communication, tools and systems across the sector. The developments have been positive and the progress has been good.

We believe the progress to date presents a number of opportunities for the Minister over the next period, elaborated in the current document which include

- Further improving the quality and reach of the ACE outcomes data series, with the possibility of linking with other data from across government to build a robust evidence base for ACE sector investment;
- Enhancing the partnerships with the Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission to formally link the ACE Outcomes Framework to the TES priorities making it easier for learners and businesses to plan a pathway for hard to reach learners;
- Increasing participation in the ACE Place tool (information for learners) to have a real time directory of ACE services available by geographic location;
- Meeting with new and existing providers to encourage innovation and focus on strategic and local priorities.

## 1. ACE Aotearoa

- 1.1. ACE Aotearoa is a dynamic network of adult and community educators which actively promotes and supports the diversity of lifelong learning in Aotearoa New Zealand. We focus on learners who have not had previous success in their education experience. We foster collaboration, co-operation and capacity to support the provision of effective services that improve learner outcomes.
- 1.2. ACE Aotearoa is membership organisation with a constitution that requires service and support to be provided to all those engaged in the adult and community education (ACE) sector, and not only its members. It provides a communication conduit between Government and the wider sector, and helps facilitate identification of direction for policy development, then co-ordinates and supports its implementation.
- 1.3. ACE Aotearoa is committed to a society based on Te Tiriti o Waitangi, a guiding framework which gives due recognition to the status of Maori as Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tiriti as citizens of our shared country. ACE Aotearoa has strong connections with a diverse group of adult education providers and is well-connected with the communities in which our members serve, including many harder to reach (rural and urban) areas of New Zealand.
- 1.4. ACE Aotearoa is a member of, and provides secretariat services to, the ACE Sector Strategic Alliance. We contract with the TEC to co-ordinate and drive professional development initiatives across the sector. As a result the sector now has a suite of tools which will allow achievements to be better quantified and improved (see Sector Led Development section below).
- 1.5. Because of its position as the lead body for the ACE Sector, ACE Aotearoa is well placed to facilitate initiatives across the ACE Sector, reducing duplication and helping deliver increased value for money, particularly in sector priority areas. ACE Aotearoa has proven ability to connect government and the sector, ensuring strong working relationships are maintained and continue over the next period.

## 2. ACE Sector context

- 2.1. The ACE sector emphasises the value of engaging in structured, proactive learning throughout life (lifelong learning) as a key tool to enhancing individual and community well-being, with positive social and economic benefits of reducing justice, health and welfare costs and increasing income and tax contributions.<sup>12</sup>
- 2.2. In particular, failure to achieve during compulsory (primary and secondary) education has been shown to be associated with increased costs to the taxpayer after the student with low educational achievement enters adult society. In 2013, Ministry of Education estimated those between 16 and 23 years old with no qualifications directly accounted for “cost to the state” four times greater than those with a Level 3 qualification.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> PWC report on ACE outcomes contribution to economy 2008

<sup>2</sup> Value of ACE, ACE Aotearoa 2013

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Education workshop data, drawn from IDI, 2014.

- 2.3. Adult and community education is recognised as an integral part of the tertiary education system in the Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019.<sup>4</sup> Priority 4 of the TES 2014-19 focuses on Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy, reflecting Government's direct interest in adult learners achieving literacy, numeracy and language (ESOL) goals to improve individual productivity and self-sufficiency<sup>5</sup>
- 2.4. Importantly, ACE provision also contributes to the other TES priorities (such as delivering skills for industry, getting at risk youth into careers, and boosting achievement of Maori and Pasifika). The sector works with people (17years and older) who have had little or no success in formal education, as well as those who are seeking new skills in response to a changing work environment or when changing personal circumstances prompt a change in career (current indications are that an individual may have as many as six career changes in a lifetime)<sup>6</sup> In addition, ACE Aotearoa is Aotearoa's representative in the international Basic Adult Education forum which links to the TES priority 'growing international linkages'.
- 2.5. Funding comes from a broad mix of individual and government purchase and philanthropic support. The local and diverse nature of the sector is a strength in working with specific individuals, needs and communities. That fragmented nature of the sector is a factor in why it has been difficult to see and quantify the contribution the sector makes to the TES and to wider government goals and investment.
- 2.6. Government has increasing access to high quality data that can improve self-funded learning, as well as government programmes, but needs a way to communicate effectively with a diverse and hard-to-reach sector to convey shifts in policy and direction and to get a positive and fast response.
- 2.7. Over the past decade, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has made funding available (through a contract with ACE Aotearoa) to support the development of coherence and quality assurance across the ACE Sector, to benefit government policy development and build understanding of government direction. This also contributes to business confidence in ACE and more efficient labour market retraining. Specific deliverables of the funding were to:
- i) Support practitioner development and capability
  - ii) Update quality assurance [QA] and external evaluation and review [EER] to reflect ACE outcomes and the TES
  - iii) Develop an outcomes tool; and begin training in the tool to encourage its use
  - iv) Provide aggregated outcome reports to TEC

During the course of the work learners told ACE Aotearoa that it was hard to find information that met their needs and got them on the right path and developing a specific tool to address that gap for learners has become an additional part of the project (funded from within the existing allocation).

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<sup>4</sup> The previous TES (2010-2014) included ACE after representation from the sector, but as a separate category with its own particular goals and measures.

<sup>5</sup> Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019, Priority 4, improving adult literacy and numeracy.

<sup>6</sup> <http://career.govt.nz/education-and-training/study-and-training-options/adults-considering-training-or-retraining>

### 3. Sector led Development

- 3.1. ACE sector providers have been working with government funders since around 2005 to develop systems which can be consistently applied across the ACE sector, taking into account the diversity of providers including differences in size, complexity and target groups of learners.
- 3.2. Since 2008, the ACE Sector Professional Development Contract has funded national projects and initiatives to improve learner focused service delivery. One key project was the ACE Sector Teaching Standards to ensure that ACE learners could be confident of the teaching skills no matter where in the country they were accessing ACE.
- 3.3. Another key project was research into learner pathways which links the ACE sector impact to the wider learning system and the TES goals. Eight learner profiles and associated pathways were identified and in consulting with Ako Aotearoa it was found that the profiles and pathways are substantially those for learners in the more formal parts of the tertiary education system.
- 3.4. A third key project has been the ACE Learner Outcomes Framework which has resulted in the development, trialling, revision and now national implementation of the ACE Learner Outcomes Tool (ACE Trace)– a cloud based assessment tool which measures the change in confidence and hope for the future (also intention for future study and employment prospects) for the ACE learner who had participated in a short, non-formal, usually non-assessed ACE course.
- 3.5. The ACE Learner Outcomes Framework also generated the notion of a ‘Learner Portal’ (aceplace) where an ACE learner can readily access information specific to ACE courses and learning opportunities in their own geographical areas.
- 3.6. Integrating all these specific tools and initiatives with an updated Quality Assurance (QA) and External Evaluation and Review (EER) process into a coherent, responsive management system is another key project which has been underway since late 2015.

### 4. Change in the ACE Sector

- 4.1. There is now better information and clarity about what works for learners available to providers, businesses, learners and government<sup>7</sup>
- 4.2. There is now an established national forum to engage Maori and Pasifika ACE providers and learners (Hui Fono) to focus on specific learning experience and strategies to engage Maori and Pasifika learners.<sup>8</sup>
- 4.3. Sector providers have begun to use a shared outcomes framework for results measurement (independently validated by Statistics NZ) and a cloud -based application (aceplace) is now being implemented to make relevant ACE information readily accessible to learners. There is growing understanding by providers of the importance of the outcomes framework giving “line of sight’ to what delivery approaches get good results, providing motivation and evidence for changes to teaching and delivery style.

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<sup>7</sup> Aggregate results have been reported in the Annual Reports of ACE Aotearoa and are shared with TEC through quarterly reporting. In addition we have research reports available and updates are given at conferences.

<sup>8</sup> A research report which documents the evolution of, and learnings from 10 years of Hui Fono is in final draft prior to publication.

- 4.4. ACE Aotearoa has entered into partnership with the Department of Corrections to trial the use of the outcomes tool to measure the effectiveness of Corrections programmes with their clients.
  - 4.5. ACE Aotearoa has worked in close consultation with learners and the sector. Engagement, listening and communication have been as important as the tools themselves in leading and embedding the changes. We have improved our digital communication reach, used Adult Learners' Week to share messages about learner achievements and participated in conferences nationally and internationally to get and share ideas and information.
  - 4.6. Since 2016 there has been a change in ACE providers around the country with 14 new providers being appointed. A specific key role for ACE Aotearoa includes familiarising those providers with the tools and support that are available to assist them in their new responsibilities.
5. Opportunities for Minister
    - 5.1. The developments are positive and the progress made has been good. There is a very strong base from which to make further gains for learners across the Sector, supporting government's policy objectives.
    - 5.2. In respect of the ACE Learner Outcomes Framework and ACE Trace, there is scope to further improve the quality and reach of the outcomes data series, with the possibility of linking with other data from across government, to build a robust evidence base for future ACE sector investment, and ultimately to be able to record in government accounts the return on that investment from reduced health, welfare and justice costs.
    - 5.3. As part of that work, there is potential to work in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission to formally link the ACE Outcomes framework to the TES priorities, making it easier for learners and businesses to plan a pathway for hard to reach learners.
    - 5.4. In respect of the ACE Place tool there is scope for further participation with the ability to have a real time directory of ACE services available by geographic location.
    - 5.5. There are opportunities to meet with new and existing providers to encourage innovation and focus on local and strategic priorities among providers (capability development, network enhancement, international exchange, communication and professional development).
6. Conclusion
    - 6.1. I would be delighted to meet with you and discuss these, or other, opportunities in more detail, or provide any further clarification or elaboration as required.

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