



Can non-formal community-controlled adult literacy education help to overcome barriers to successful VET completions in Aboriginal communities?

Evidence from the *YES, I CAN!* adult literacy campaign in western NSW

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Research Question

What is the extent of low literacy in Aboriginal Australia, and what impact does it have on individuals, families and communities ?



Table 1. % Australian population at or below Level One Literacy, by age

Persons Age range	% Level One or below
15–19	11.6
20–24	10.2
25–29	9.3
30–34	11.2
35–39	8.8
40–44	9.6
45–49	10.4
50–54	16.0
55–59	17.9
60–64	21.8
65–74	29.8
Total	14.1

Source: ABS (2013)

Table 2. Literacy levels, Australia, for people unemployed/not in labour force

Unemployed/not in labour force	
Below Level 1/ Level 1	22.0%
Level 2	33.1%
Level 3	30.2%
Level 4/5	8.7%
Missing	6.0%
Total	100.0%

Source: ABS (2014)

**Table 3. Self-assessed literacy,
LFLF Household Surveys 2013-2015**

Self assessed literacy	%	Number
Very well	26.3	127
Ok, can't fill in forms	38.4	185
Not very well	16.2	78
Not at all	3.7	18
No Response	20.1	97
Total		482



LFLF's 'best estimate': Between 40% & 60% of Aboriginal adults struggle with English language literacy; with figure rising higher in more remote areas, or where SAE not the home language

VET System Response

Table 4. Selected VET System Data, 2014

Indig/Non	Quals	NSW	Aust
Indig	C1/2	2600	8600
	Total	7300	20900
	C1/2 %	35.6%	41.1%
Non Indig	C1/2	27800	108000
	Total	135800	518600
	C1/2 %	20.5%	20.8%
Persons	C1/2	30400	116600
	Total	143100	539500
Indig as %	C1/2 grads	8.6%	7.4%
	All grads	5.1%	3.9%

Sources: NCVET (2016) & Productivity Commission (2016)

Table 4. LFLF Outcomes x site 2012-2016

Site	Period	Intakes	Enrolled	Completed	Completion rate
Wicannia	02/2012-08/2013	3	40	23	57.5%
Bourke	09/2013-04/2015	4	70	51	72.9%
Enngonia	09/2013-12/2013	1	21	15	71.4%
Brewarrina	09/2015-11/2016	2	37	22	59.5%
Weilmoringle	08/2016-11/2016	1	7	6	85.7%
Total		11	175	117	66.9%

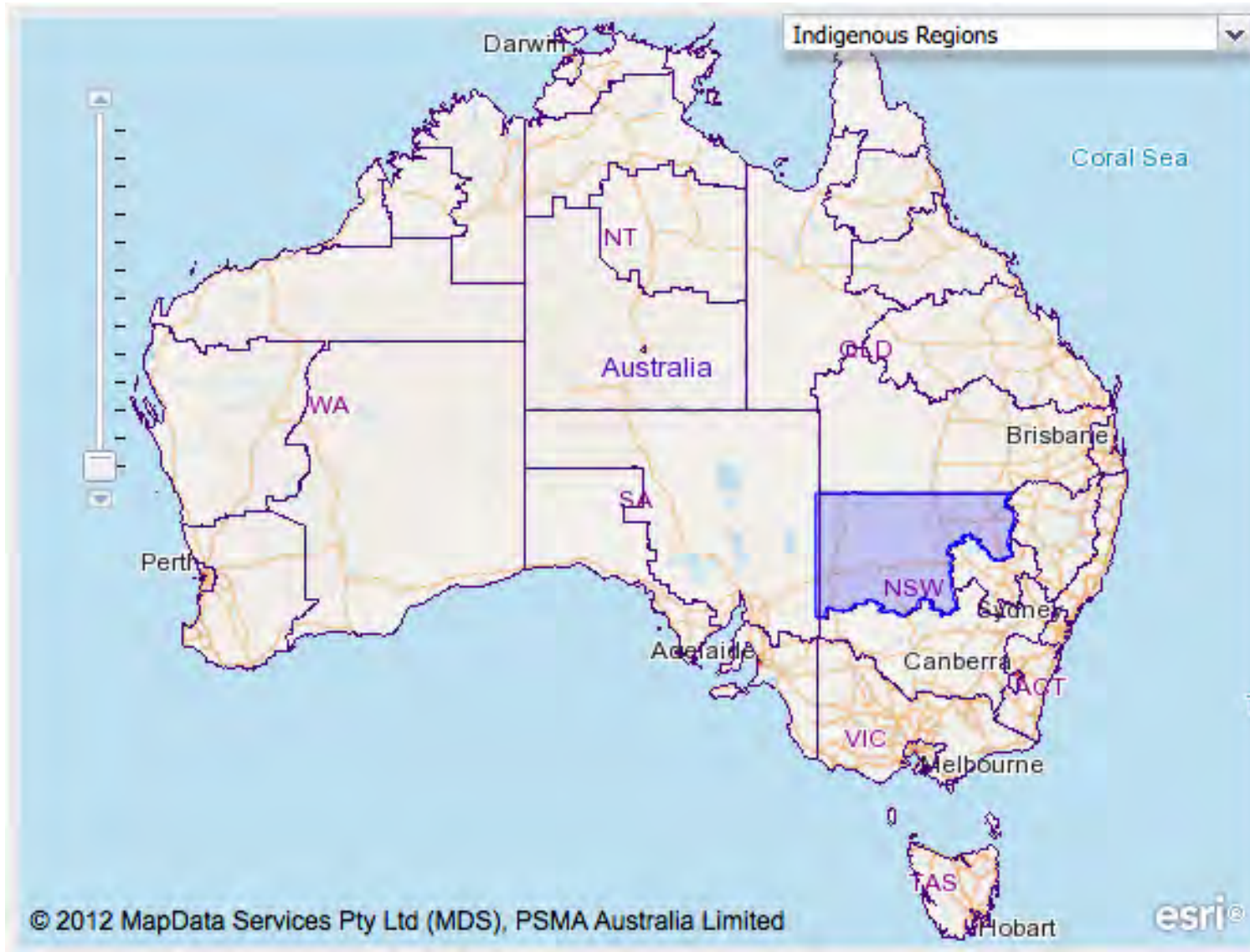
Source: LFLF database

Table 5. Total NSW Western VET Activity (Indigenous students only) 2014

Location		Certificate One	Certificate Two	Total
Bourke/Brewarrina	Enrol	136	271	407
	Complete	27	28	55
	Retention	19.9%	10.3%	13.5%
Far west	Enrol	41	110	151
	Complete	11	10	21
	Retention	26.8%	9.1%	13.9%
Total western NSW	Enrol	177	381	558
	Complete	38	38	76
	Retention	21.5%	10.0%	13.6%

Source: NCVET VOCSTATS

ABS Indigenous Region Data Nth West NSW (IREG103)



Total Aboriginal
adult
(15+)population
no longer in
school: 4,780

If low literacy =
40%, then target
popn =
1,912

Total area:
285895.4 sq
Kms

Framework for understanding the impact of literacy on development

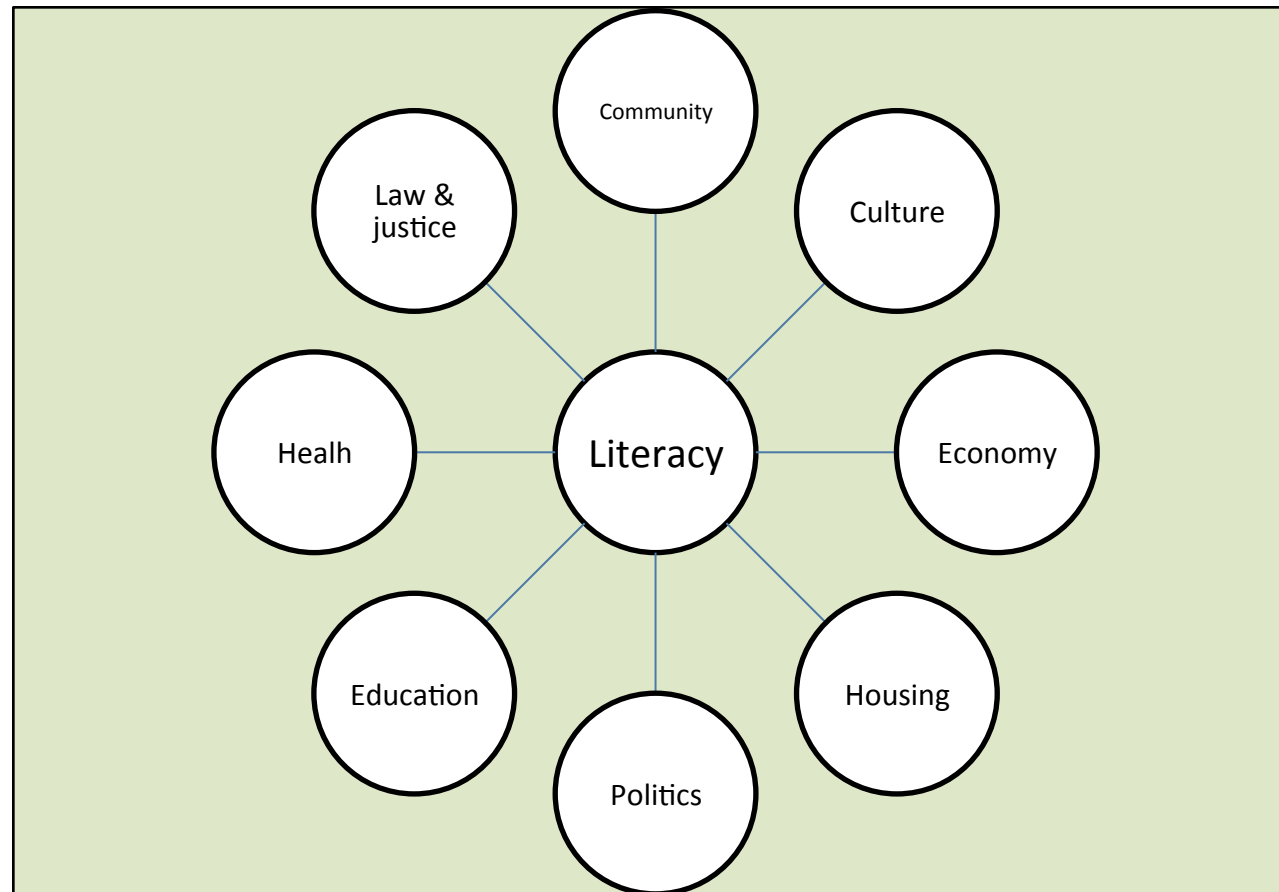


Table 6. SEE vs Campaign comparison

Community 'X'	%	N
Adult population	100%	1000
Number with low literacy	40%	400
SEE impact		
Jobseekers eligible for SEE	50%	200
SEE enrolment rate	50%	100
VET completion rate	15%	15
Post program low literacy	38.5%	385
LFLF impact		
Eligible LFLF	100%	400
Enrolment rate	50%	200
LFLF completion rate	67%	134
Post program low literacy	26.6%	266

Why does it work?



“The key for this program is ..., it makes illiteracy the problem of the literate, not the illiterate. I think that’s key to the success of this program...You mobilise the community behind it so that it is supporting the students who are doing it. If you don’t, they don’t own it. It’s somebody else, whether it’s me or somebody else bringing it to town...”

Jack Beetson

Executive Director, Literacy for Life Foundation