



Covid provides golden opportunity to improve literacy, says Hotline

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Australians can seize on Covid-19 restrictions as an opportunity to pursue further learning, says the Reading Writing Hotline, urging thousands of people with difficulty reading and writing to pick up the phone during Adult Learners Week (1-9 September) and call the Hotline to find their nearest class.

Many Australians finding themselves at home due to the Covid-19 outbreak have called the Hotline, Australia's literacy referral service, to fulfil a lifelong ambition of improving their literacy skills after struggling for years. Calls to the Hotline surged by 30% after the initial lockdowns.

Hotline Manager Vanessa Iles says many callers have been eager to use their newfound time to brush up on their skills, and there's no better time to call than during Adult Learners Week.

"The pandemic has wreaked havoc with many lives, but for some it has provided the time and opportunity to prepare for life after Covid," says Ms Iles. "Technology is rapidly transforming our workplaces and we've spoken to many people, both workers and business owners, who want to improve their literacy or numeracy in preparation for returning to work."

Difficulty with reading and numeracy is not uncommon. Most of our callers grew up and went to school in Australia, and speak English as their first language. Most are employed, and some are even employers. But there is still so much shame attached to difficulty reading and writing which is holding people back from seeking further education.

The Hotline often hears from people who have wanted to make the call for ten or 20 years, who have only just found the courage to make the call. Usually there is a turning point, like life event or a sudden opportunity, that will push people over the line and give them the strength to pick up the phone.

Covid restrictions, for all their difficulty, provide such an opportunity. People who find themselves with more time on their hands due to physical distancing or changes to their workplace should not hesitate to pick up the phone. Classes are resuming in many parts of Australia, and online or physical materials can also help new learners.

The key message of Adult Learners Week is that it's never too late to learn. No matter how long you have found literacy challenging, you are not alone.

"Picking up the phone is the first step to changing your life. We have helped thousands of Australians on the road to overcoming their learning difficulties, and we are ready to help you."

The Reading Writing Hotline is 1300 6555 06. Local caller data is available on request.

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