

# Facts about the Hotline

## History and funding

The Hotline was set up in 1994 to support viewers of an adult literacy TV show, but it soon became clear that a broader advice service was needed. The Hotline celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024. It is funded by the Australian government and managed by TAFE NSW. It is based in central Sydney and handles around 4,000 enquiries each year from around Australia.

## How does the Hotline reach people who can't read?

The Hotline advertises on free-to-air TV with paid ads and community service announcements. Advertising is expensive, so our ads are often outside prime time and outside metropolitan areas. We work with local radio stations and print media to maximise our community impact, along with our social media. Hotline posters and pamphlets are distributed to a wide range of local government and community groups, and we speak at industry conferences and webinars.

Our advertising jingle and logo is iconic and much-loved. It has stood the test of time and is a great way for adults to remember our important phone number.

## Is it just a phone line?

The Hotline began as a phone line to give callers details of their nearest literacy class. The Hotline's role has become more complex over recent years, and it acts as a one-stop-shop for anyone needing information or advice about adult literacy.

- **Workplace literacy advice.** We give advice to employers and businesses about learning resources, successful models, and how to find suitable teachers.
- **Community advice.** We put organisations in touch with other groups, to help build literate communities, and share models of good practice to support lifelong learning.
- **Advice to teachers.** Experienced teachers are in short supply. We advise newer teachers on how to prepare sessions, customize materials, and cater for learners at different levels.
- **Resources for learners.** Some of our callers have nothing available to them. The Hotline has produced a range of beginner workbooks for learners with no available provision.
- **Training for tutors.** The Hotline developed a tutor training program for libraries and community groups to train their volunteer tutors. We also created a self-paced version, for people working on their own to help another adult with reading.
- **Advice to governments.** The Hotline has provided valuable input to dozens of reviews, inquiries, and strategies at all levels of government. We have long-term national statistics, and a direct connection with the voices of learners.
- **Partnerships.** The Hotline works with government and community organisations to increase awareness and support action around adult literacy issues.

## Who does it work with?

The Hotline works with organisations across education, governments, communities, industry, and health including

- Adult Learning Australia
- Australian Council for Adult Literacy (and state CALs)
- Australian Council of Social Services (and state COSSs)
- Community Education Australia
- Sydney Health Literacy Lab
- Men's Sheds Australia

## Who works on the Hotline?

The Hotline team is made up of a full time Manager, a Project Officer, and a part time administration assistant. Enquiries are handled by a small roster of wonderful, experienced adult literacy specialist teachers who work part time at the Hotline in addition to their work in colleges.

## Does the Hotline teach classes?

The Hotline doesn't run any classes itself. We refer adults to programs run by others such as colleges, libraries, community centres, churches, or volunteer tutors. We have a large national database of all adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy provision.

We don't advise any one **approach** to teaching adults, as each individual has unique needs and circumstances. After referral, a good teacher or tutor talks with their adult learner to find out about the person, their previous experiences, their current situation, and their needs and goals. This should be the basis of the educational program.

As well as reading, writing and spelling enquiries, the Hotline also handles enquiries about everyday **maths** (numeracy). Increasingly, we try to find solutions for people with **digital** literacy needs, including how to handle online study, fill online forms, use smartphones, and access services.

We do handle enquiries about English Language classes for adults, but generally these are referred to one of the many well-established services for second-language learners.

## What about individual tutors?

Individual tutors can be a great first step for adults. The Hotline refers learners to established adult literacy volunteer tutor programs run by libraries and community groups. This supports literacy by making sure tutors are trained and can get advice when they need it. We also refer to qualified private tutors, where appropriate.

People who want to become a volunteer adult literacy tutor should call us for advice on the nearest tutoring scheme. The Hotline website includes an online self-paced tutor training course, as well as a group training program for use by libraries and organisations.