



MEDIA RELEASE

Transforming Your Life Through Adult Education

A chance conversation in a woolshed about going back to school turned Lauren Stirling's life around. Thanks to a shearing course, 26-year-old Lauren has found her passion and a new career.

In the decade since she left school at 16, Lauren has tried at all sorts of jobs but never stayed long.

'I've never been able to hold down a job. I've worked as a spray painter, drover, at the races, in a supermarket but I've never been able to stick at anything.'

But during a casual stint helping out on a sheep farm, Lauren fell in love with shearing.

'The farmer said why don't you go to shearing school. I said, "What's shearing school?" After he explained it, I said, "Sign me up."

Now Lauren is a full-time shearer who earns a healthy income and loves her new career.

Lauren is one of six ambassadors who will be the faces of this year's Adult Learners Week, which runs from September 1 to 8.

Other ambassadors include Samuel Tierney who overcame his struggles with reading and writing and has his sights set on a marine engineering career. And Paco Lara who was a renowned Flamenco guitarist in Europe but who found himself in Australia with no English, having to start all over again. Chris Roland who left school at 12, has rebuilt a life fractured by domestic violence and found new confidence through a course in Women's Studies.

Lauren and the others will be sharing their inspiring stories during this year's Adult Learners Week celebrations and encouraging Australians to take up adult education as a way of finding new career pathways, discovering hidden talents and exploring new directions.

A new report by the OECD calls on all countries to step up their efforts to encourage people to take up lifelong learning to navigate and adapt to a rapidly changing world. The most at

risk of being left behind are young people, people who are not working or studying and those whose jobs are most at risk of transformation¹.

Adult education is an untapped resource that can help turn lives around according to Adult Learning Australia, the national peak body for adult and community education.

Adult Learners Week 2021, which runs from 1–8 September, highlights the breadth of opportunities for further learning available across the country. This year's theme, *Change Your Story* promotes the idea that people can make a fresh start, take their lives in new directions, start or create a new future through adult education.

“Adult Learners Week is a great opportunity for all Australians to investigate what’s out there for them,” says Associate Professor Annette Foley, President of Adult Learning Australia.

“Community based classes offer a terrific alternative particularly for those Australians whose schooling has been disrupted, or who had negative experiences of formal education, or who go through some transition in their lives or careers that calls for new skills or understanding.

“People can benefit from adult education in so many ways; for example, improving their digital skills; preparing to return to formal study or learning more about their health and wellbeing – it’s all about encouraging people to get involved and opening up new opportunities for them,” Associate Professor Foley says.

To find learning opportunities online or in your area, visit adultlearnersweek.org, or check out Adult Learners’ Week on Facebook.

Adult Learners’ Week, now in its 26th year, is coordinated by Adult Learning Australia, the national peak body for adult and community education. It is a UNESCO initiative supported in Australia by the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training.

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Media information

President of Adult Learning Australia, Associate Professor Annette Foley and adult learners Lauren Stirling, Samuel Tierney, Paco Lara and Chris Roland are available for interview. To arrange an interview, or for further information, please contact Margot Gorski on 0412 393 394 or at margot@prmatters.com.au.

¹ <https://www.oecd.org/education/covid-19-pandemic-highlights-urgent-need-to-scale-up-investment-in-lifelong-learning-for-all-says-oecd.htm>