

# Towards health literacy 'take-off' in Australia

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# The current picture on partnerships

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- ❑ Australia is ...'without formal alliances, shared agenda, unifying framework or national approach' (Green et al. 2007, p.30) linking the literacy and numeracy field with the health sector
  - ❑ Local health literacy partnerships are largely ad hoc and based on short term funding
  - ❑ Many health literacy partnerships are 'under the radar'
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# The health literacy survey (ABS 2008): A catalyst for action?

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- ❑ Overseas examples of health literacy surveys (USA – Kutner et al 2006; Canada - Canadian Council on Learning 2007)
  - ❑ *Health Literacy, Australia* (ABS 2008) reports that 59% of adults in Australia have poor or very poor health literacy skills. The survey results show generally that those people more likely to have poorer health literacy skills are: older, lacking formal education, unemployed or whose first language is not English. Hence, health literacy is very much about social inclusion.
  - ❑ Health and adult literacy sectors both share similar discourses e.g. focus on community capacity models, social capital building and cross-sectoral approaches.
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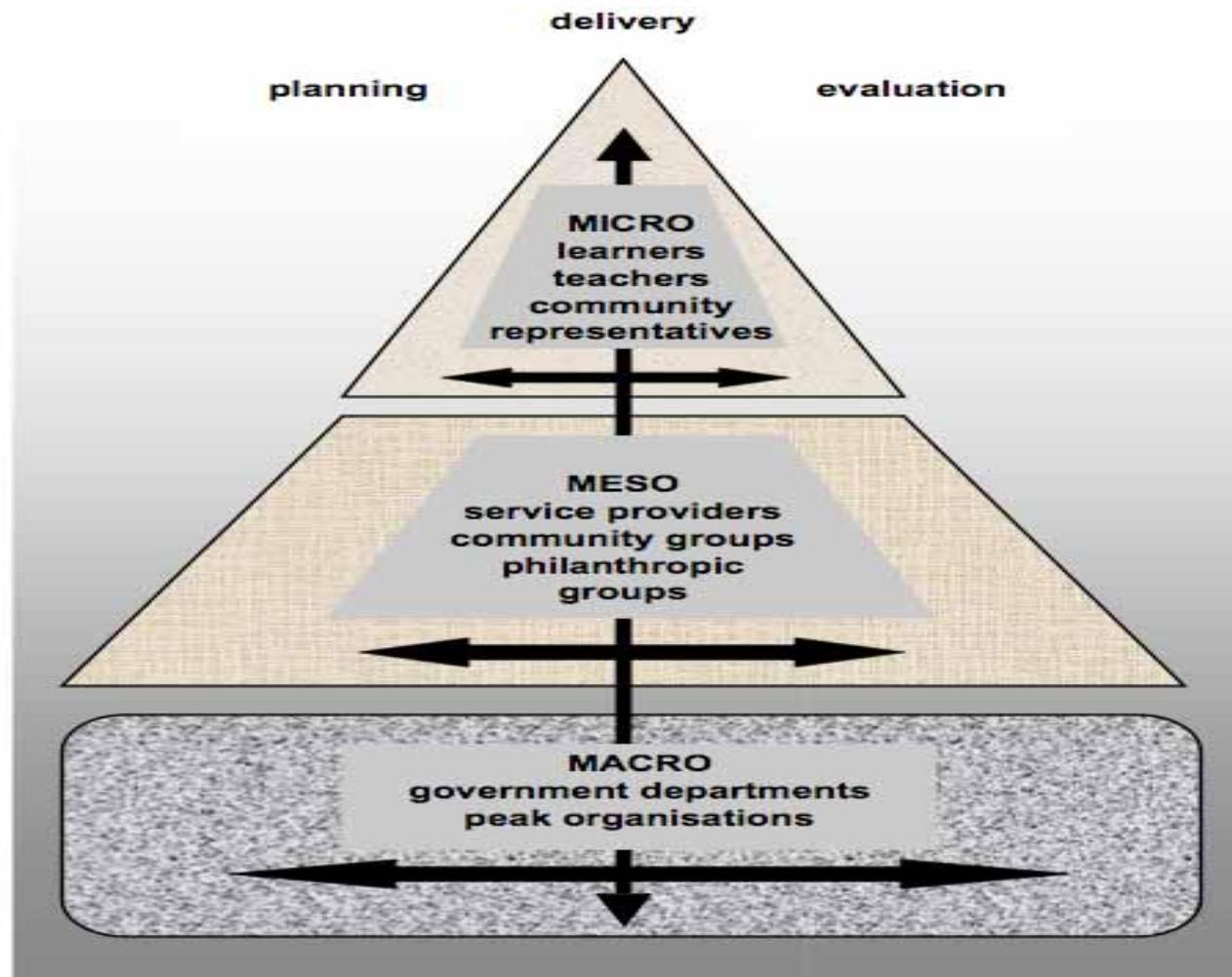
# What needs to happen: Some policy and partnerships processes

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- ❑ A prominent promoter of health literacy (e.g. Financial literacy is promoted strongly by Paul Clitheroe)
  - ❑ Governments need to recognise its significance (e.g. COAG agenda) – policy development – national strategy – national taskforce – funding (e.g. as with mental health)
  - ❑ Dialogue within and between peak organisations in health and adult literacy
  - ❑ Develop horizontal and vertical partnership links at the macro, meso and micro levels
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# Partnership structures

(Balatti, Black & Falk forthcoming, NCVER)



# References

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  - ❑ Balatti, J, Black, S & Falk, I forthcoming, *A new social capital paradigm for adult literacy: Partnerships, policy and pedagogy*, NCVET, Adelaide.
  - ❑ Canadian Council on Learning 2007, *Health literacy in Canada: Initial results from the international adult literacy and skills survey*, Canadian Council on Learning, Ottawa.
  - ❑ Green, J, Lo Bianco, J & Wyn, J 2007, 'Discourses in interaction: The intersection of literacy and health research internationally', *Literacy & Numeracy Studies*, vol.15, no.2 pp19-37.
  - ❑ Kutner, M, Greenberg, E, Yin, J, Paulsen, C & White, S 2006, *The health literacy of America's adults: Results from the 2003 national assessment of adult literacy*, US Department of Education, Washington DC.
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