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## SENATOR THE HON URSULA STEPHENS

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Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector  
Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Prime Minister for Social Inclusion

Ms Margaret McHugh  
President  
Australian Council for Adult Literacy  
GPO Box 2283  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Ms McHugh *Margaret,*

Thank you for your letters of 19 December 2008 to myself and the Hon Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, concerning the loss of funds for the Adult Literacy National Project (ALNP). Minister Gillard has asked me to reply on her behalf. I apologise for the delay in responding.

I understand your concerns in relation to the decision concerning the \$1.5 million ALNP funding and I am very aware of the role this funding allocation has played in supporting key services, developing resources and contributing to a national perspective on adult language, literacy and numeracy. Like you, I am particularly concerned about the future of the Reading Writing Hotline (the Hotline).

As you know, Australian Government funding for ALNP ceased on 31 December 2008 and the new National Agreement (NA) for Skills and Workforce Development agreed by the Council of Australian Governments came into force on 1 January 2009. Some residual funds from the 2008 ALNP allocation are still active and are dedicated to honouring final payments on existing contracts. For example, the Hotline's funding will cease when the current Funding Agreement with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations expires on 31 March 2009.

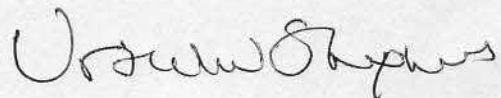
The NA sets out a commitment between the Government and the states to work towards increasing the skill levels of all Australians and provides greater flexibility to target funding to address individual state needs and to achieve agreed vocational education and training outcomes.

States and territories are now responsible for deciding whether to continue funding the Hotline, and the other activities previously funded through the ALNP, under the new arrangements. As you note, there is currently no other available Government funding that might be used for these purposes.

As NSW TAFE currently manages the Hotline on behalf of the Government, I have written to the Hon Verity Firth MP, NSW Minister for Education and Training, seeking a commitment to fund the service after the expiry of the current funding arrangements.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention, and I would like to acknowledge the ongoing efforts of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy on behalf of adult literacy professionals.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Ursula Stephens'.

**Dr Ursula Stephens**

20 January 2009