Adult Forum Discussion Notes

VicTESOL Symposium, 30 October 2026

Questions

a) How have learner needs been changing?

b) What techniques and resources have been effective in responding to these changes?

Summary

Gemini AI has been used to summarise and synthesise the verbatim feedback provided across **Sheet A** and **Sheet B (see Appendix 1)**, organized by core thematic areas:

1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Technology Integration

- **Classroom Management & Assessment Integrity:** There are growing concerns over monitoring student assessments regarding phone and AI use, creating an urgent need for a reliable tracking and management system (Sheet A, #2). In practice, teachers frequently have to intervene and ask students to put phones away (Sheet B, #1).
- **Dual Nature of AI:** While AI poses risks—such as hindering metacognitive struggle (Sheet A, #8) and potentially impacting literacy and fluency if students bypass natural learning processes (Sheet A, #6)—it also offers benefits. For instance, translation tools can provide richer context for English language learners (Sheet A, #4), and innovative models have successfully marked spoken assessments (Sheet A, #7).
- **The Digital Divide & Skills Gap:** Students exhibit vastly different baseline levels of technology understanding, split between technical digital skills and digital literacy, which directly impacts curriculum progression (Sheet A, #12). Furthermore, student behaviour around information gathering has fundamentally shifted, with answers to classic research questions now defaulting to tools like ChatGPT (Sheet A, #11).

- **Staff Upskilling Needs:** Educators feel underprepared in certain areas, noting a lack of formal training to foster critical lenses on AI usage (Sheet A, #5), alongside a strong desire to learn how to leverage AI more effectively to redirect student learning (Sheet A, #3).

2. Teaching, Curriculum, & Assessment Challenges

- **Curriculum & Assessment Burden:** Educators face uncertainty regarding curriculum trajectories—such as managing complex student journeys like a mother attempting re-entry into the workforce (Sheet A, #1). Both teachers and students experience a heavy assessment burden (Sheet B, #10), compounded by issues where prepared students either sabotage, avoid, or are absent for assessments (Sheet B, #5).
- **Resource Limitations & Motivation:** Programs face limited resources, lack of internet access, and difficulties in maintaining student motivation (Sheet B, #3).
- **Pedagogical Strategy:** Educators highlight the ongoing challenge of shifting student mindsets away from valuing the certificate itself over actual skill acquisition (Sheet B, #7), while successfully using tactical mitigations like breaking down tasks into manageable daily chunks to combat assessment anxiety (Sheet B, #8).

3. Student Demographics, Isolation, & Engagement

- **Cohort-Specific Challenges:** Distinct groups face unique barriers. For example, older cohorts who are not seeking employment can feel isolated when program focus heavily leans toward pre-employment (Sheet B, #2). Conversely, some students view programs primarily as a fallback during constant overseas travel or due to post-program uncertainty (Sheet B, #6), while others in specific environments (like prisons) focus strictly on immediate employment outcomes (Sheet B, #4).
- **Personal Connection:** A notable concern is the lack of genuine personal connection with individuals within the current delivery model (Sheet B, #13).

4. Operational & Institutional Factors

- **Operations & Funding:** Daily operations are heavily influenced by fluctuating student intakes, shifting class sizes based on external factors (Sheet B, #11), and broader funding implications (Sheet B, #12).
- **Staff Connectivity:** Given that program providers are geographically dispersed, teachers express a strong appreciation for professional development opportunities that bring educators together to collaborate and discuss practices (Sheet B, #9).



Appendix 1 - Verbatim notes

Sheet A (Table A)

1 Uncertainty of curriculum - impacting teachers. Who will manage the student journey EG a mum who wants to go back to work

AI

2 (Pink) How to monitor students in assessments with phone/AI. How to manage it. We need to have a system

3 (Pink) We need to learn how to use AI better so we can redirect

4 (Pink) Saw a student using translate which gave more context so CAN be useful

5 (Pink**)** Critical lens - not trained in that

6 (Pink) The use of AI and how they can lose literacy - learning but students able to learn English –but make mistakes impacting fluency – BUT NOT LEARN

7 (Pink) LWA Conference guy dupd(?) AI model to mark spoken assessments – can be useful

8 (Pink) AI doesn't allow for the struggle meta cognition

Digital Tech

9 (Pink) So many resources now available - Dig subscriptions useful

10 (Pink) Younger people say that typing for them is the same processing as writing for older generation

11 (Pink) Digital tech - answers have changed to questions eg where do you go to find information answer chat GPT

A VERY BIG ISSUE CURRENTLY

12 Every student has a different level of understanding of technology two things one digital skills 2 digital literacy - can impact getting through curriculum

13 Safety. Have to be sure students are up to date with being safe

Sheet B (Table B)

1 (Blue) The use of AI. Have to ask students to put the phone down

2 (Blue) Older cohort. Not looking for work. Sometime the focus is on pre-employment so older clients feel isolated.

3 (Blue) Resources are limited. No internet. Difficulty motivating learners.

4 (Blue) Getting a job in the prison is all they want.

5 (Blue) Some students are ready for assessment but they either sabotage it or don't attempt the task or are absent.

6 (Blue) Going overseas constantly students just want to be in the program because they don't know what they will do after.

7 (Red) Telling students constantly that certificate is not important but gaining skills are.

8 (Red) Students when anxious about assessments break it down into manageable tasks (do half a task in a day)

9 (Red) Providers of the program are spread out. More professional developments are appreciated so teachers can get together and discuss.

10 Yellow) Assessment burden on both teachers and students

11 (Yellow) Student intake and class sizes fluctuate depending on external factors

12 (Yellow) Funding implications impacting daily operations

13 (Pink) Connection with person personally is not there