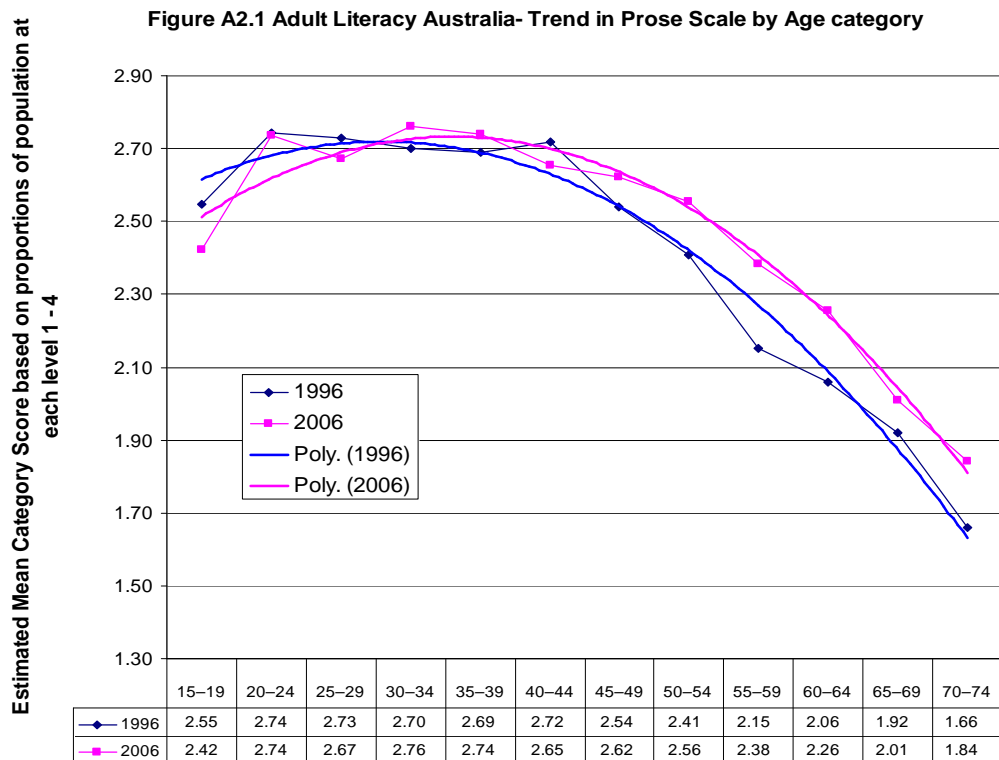


Appendix 2 Adult literacy trends with age

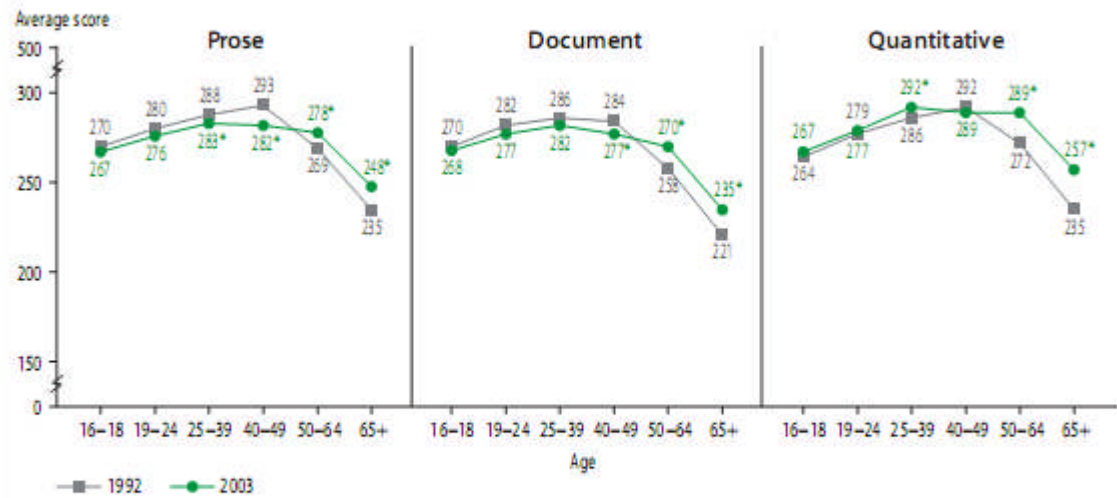
Figure A2.1 is based on 2006 ABS data. For both 1996 and 2006 average prose reading skill levels increase from Age 15-19 up to about 30-35 and taper off after that. This implies an increase in skill level across the whole age cohort even after leaving school. It is possible this is due to ongoing enrolment in post-secondary education.



Source: ABS 42280DO001 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, Summary Results, 1996 and 2006

US reports of adult literacy provide direct scale score means for each age group. These are shown in Figure 11 below taken from the National Center for Education Statistics (2005). *A First Look at the Literacy of America's Adults in the 21st Century*. NCES Number: 2006470. The pattern by mean scale score by age category is similar to the Australian data. In both 1992 and 2003 the means scores increase until about age 40-49. Both patterns suggest increasing competency in literacy and quantitative skills with age, plateauing in the early to mid 30s.

Figure 11. Average prose, document, and quantitative literacy scores of adults, by age: 1992 and 2003



* Significantly different from 1992.

NOTE: Adults are defined as people 16 years of age and older living in households or prisons. Adults who could not be interviewed due to language spoken or cognitive or mental disabilities (3 percent in 2003 and 4 percent in 1992) are excluded from this figure.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey and 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (2005) A First Look at the Literacy of America's Adults in the 21st Century. NCES Number: 2006470.