

# ALFABET

NEWSLETTER OF THE ABORIGINAL LITERACY FOUNDATION

SUMMER 2025

TODAY A READER,  
TOMORROW A  
LEADER

A bumper book year for the  
Aboriginal Literacy Foundation!  
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| RW (BOB) INGHAM                               |  |  |



# CEO'S REPORT

2024 has been a wonderful year for the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation. Our VCE support classes in Melbourne have been very successful, and regional and online tutoring continue to grow. In Ballarat, we have tutoring four nights a week, with special emphasis on our early years class and the Aspire Program for Indigenous girls.

We have expanded our classes in Eastern Victoria/Southern New South Wales, but we have also undertaken further tutoring in the Western Victorian regional centres of Hamilton and Horsham.

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation regards the support of children with reading difficulties as the key to their long-term prosperity. It's important to note that in both New South Wales and in Victoria, recent Occupational Health and Safety legislation has made it impossible to employ someone who is not functionally literate. Distance Education continues to support regional students where we are not able to offer in-person tutoring, and we have several students in regional NSW and Queensland who have been benefiting from the program for multiple years. It is a reflection on modern times that many students have told us they prefer to work online with a tutor (still face to face on screen) rather than coming into class after school.

Over the past twelve months, we have sent books to at least two remote northern schools every week and the number of books sent exceeds fifty thousand. As ALFABET readers will be aware, we continue to distribute our wonderful Healthy Living series which is as popular as ever. We have also been working closely with the Bininj Kunwok Regional Language and Culture Centre to produce dual-language books for the most widely spoken dialects of East Arnhem Land. We expect books in seven languages to be printed and distributed by the end of the year, and we look forward to bringing you developments as soon as we are able to.

I should like to pay particular credit to our Indigenous supporters who have in some cases been with us for more than three decades. In the early years Steve Johnson played a very important role in helping establish the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation. He had close associations with both the Wathaurong people and the neighbouring Yorta Yorta nation. He also had wide contact with other Aboriginal groups including those living on the Bass Strait Islands. He helped initiate our very successful holiday programs based at Ballarat and Federation University. These week-long programs attracted students from as far away as Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Sadly, Steve passed away shortly before the COVID epidemic but his association and his contribution continues to this day. I should also like to mention Ann Patmore who has also been with us for more than thirty years and continues to come in once a week

to mentor Aboriginal students. She has been particularly supportive for those students who have family or health issues or who have not been able to come to tutoring for some other reason. Her support has kept many students in class who might very well fail to learn to read without her wonderful mentoring and support.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge a wonderful bequest of Joan Percy from Ipswich in Queensland. This bequest has enabled the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation to expand and develop our various programs. Her interest in the Aspire Program for girls and women has made an important contribution in this area as well.

Thank you to all our supporters for the past year. It would be impossible for us to do our work without your support and through this work we not only help Aboriginal students to read and write but by example we also cause the Government bureaucracies and other institutions to also pursue this important goal.

Thank you again and a very Happy Christmas to you all.

**Dr. Tony Cree**

**CEO and Founder  
Aboriginal Literacy Foundation**





# BOOK PROGRAMS

The Books to the North program covers schools across regional and remote Australia, and now delivers books to Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. As of this year, we have also begun sending books to schools in South Australia.

We have been able to send boxes of books to over 100 schools this year, all across regional Australia. From Terms 1 and 2 we covered Queensland, sending books to areas as remote as Moa Island, beyond the tip of Cape York. From Term 3 we delivered to the Northern Territory, to schools in the far north in Arnhem Land as well as the centre at Alice Springs, and the newly-added South Australia and to outback regions in the Far North including Andamooka and Pipalyatjara in the northwest corner of the state. Into Term 4 we delivered to Western Australian schools, from inland towns like Meekatharra to the far coast of the Gove Peninsula. As the year begins to close we have returned to Queensland, where the program will go around Australia all over again.

The ALF intends to write to many more remote and regional schools in 2025 to expand the number of schools that are able to fill their libraries with books for their students, and help increase literacy in these regions.

## Books Bring Benefit

The boxes we distribute to remote and regional schools include new and second hand-books that have been donated. We also include our own Healthy Living Series books. The feedback received has been positive and includes the following:

*"We are able to update the range of books in our library. Also having 2 copies of a book allows more students to access the story."* – St Michael's School, Palm Island QLD.

*"This has provided resources that our students love. We have also been able to give families some books to take home. Giving families access they wouldn't normally get."* – Collinsville State School, Collinsville QLD.

*"Keep up the great program. Some of the titles we were able to send as take-home readers thus not just students access the reading material."* - One Arm Point Remote Community School, Via Broome, WA.

*"We are able to update the range of books in our library. The program has improved the skills of your school officers. Giving them more confidence to teach literacy."* - St Michael's School, Palm Island, QLD

*"The influx of books, with encouragement from staff encourages our students to read. Also we have an after school learning club for Aboriginal students who now have greater access to books because of this program."* - Nth Tom Price Primary School, WA

*"We appreciate the free literature that you sent us! We are currently making a quiet place in a break out (chill out) room, where students can choose to enter and read for enjoyment. Thank you so much for the lovely books."* - Baler Primary School, Sth Headland, WA

*"It is great to have books that represent our students' rich culture and language. To have books where they can see themselves represented is very important."* - Ludmilla Primary School, Winnellie, NT

*"This has provided resources that our students love. We have also been able to give families some books to take home, giving families access they wouldn't normally get."*





## Other Recipients

The ALF has sent many sets of our self-published Healthy Living Series books (each set containing all five books) to various organisations that have requested them, which has come to include many state government bodies, public schools, local councils, health organisations, non-profits, Indigenous associations and Aboriginal corporations.

Many schools all across Australia have requested books, including some in cities such as Marrickville, Sydney, in regional towns like Kempsey, NSW, and in far remote areas such as Oodnadatta in far north-east Arnhem Land. We're always happy to provide books directly to schools to give them resources about healthy practices for their kids.

We've also sent sets to several Aboriginal corporations and health services, these include the Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation in northwest Sydney, the Aboriginal Medical Service Redfern, the Pilbara Aboriginal Health Alliance and the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service. Our most recent book, 'What We Hear', illustrates simple health information for the prevention of ear infections, which we believe is useful for any health organisation working in public outreach and with parents of young children.

There are many other types of organisations which have asked for books as well, including hospitals, such as those of the Queen Elizabeth Centre and Cumberland Hospital; non-profits and advocacy organisations including Ngunya Jarjum in Lismore, NSW and Gunawirra in NSW (which received 120 sets of the Healthy Living Series), Act for Kids,



54 Reasons, Noah's Inclusion Services and the Indigenous Marathon Foundation.

We're always happy to send Healthy Living Series books to organisations that can spread them to families and children locally.

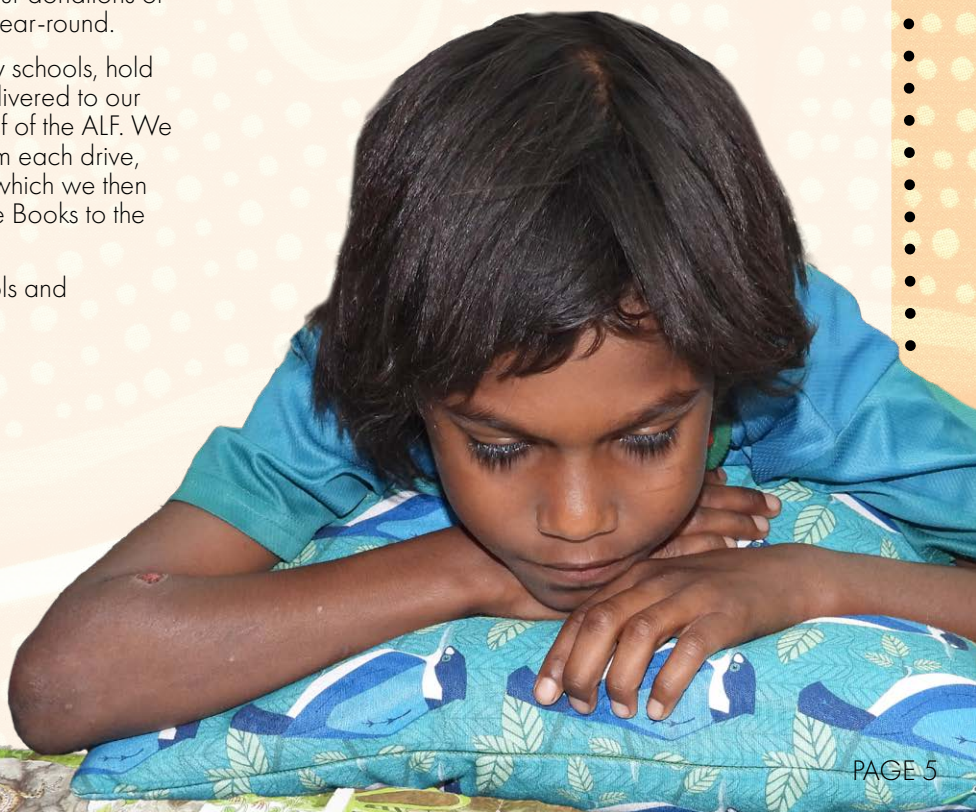
## Book Drives

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation delivers many packages of books to schools through its Books to the North program, adding up to many thousands of books over a year. And while your financial donations allow us to continue operating and paying expenses, it is also our donations of books that allow this program to continue year-round.

To this end, many organisations, particularly schools, hold book drives which are then either kindly delivered to our office and warehouse, or picked up by staff of the ALF. We usually receive multiple boxes of books from each drive, which make up almost the entire inventory which we then send to regional and remote schools for the Books to the North program.

We would like to thank the following schools and organisations who have sent books to us:

Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School  
Marymede Catholic College  
Wantirna College  
Gordon Geelong East Tafe  
Whiz Kids Castle Hill  
St John's College  
Campberwell Hockey Club  
Are-Able  
St Mary's Kindergarten, Waverley  
Colonial First State  
Albert Park College  
Emmaus College  
Department of Education Victoria





# TUTORING PROGRAMS

From our founding in the mid-90's, our tutoring programs have formed the backbone of our organisation's work. In the early days, this work branched off the ATAS program which offered at-home tutoring to Indigenous students in Western Victoria.

In addition to at-home tutoring, the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation ran week-long camps at Ballarat University offering one-to-one tutoring and cultural activities. We still try to incorporate a cultural element into our work and view it as essential in maintaining engagement with our students. This may take the form of story-telling, painting, and other skills.

We have expanded from our Ballarat roots to other regional centres in Victoria, including Hamilton, Bairnsdale, and Horsham. Our Melbourne tutoring programs have also developed with support provided to St Joseph's and our VCE support classes in the CBD. The most recent development in our tutoring programs has been the use of digital technologies to access regions where we previously had no physical presence. Our partnership with Need a Tutor has been enormously beneficial to students, particularly in the era of COVID lockdowns, and even now for students who may face obstacles in attending school or other domestic challenges, such as providing support for children in out-of-home care.

Tutoring also forms the basis of other programs which are augmented to provide extra-curricular support such as the Aspire Literacy Tutoring for Girls program.

## Aspire 2024

2024 has been a very successful year for our Aspire Literacy Tutoring for Girls program. We have had regular attendance from many girls in several locations. The unique aspect of this program is that it delivers both outstanding literacy and numeracy tutoring but also mentoring.

The Aspire Program has been built to advance the education and life possibilities of young Indigenous girls who face a unique range of challenges. We know only 41% of Indigenous girls consistently attend school. There are many reasons for this. For example, it's far more common for girls to be expected to assume more domestic responsibilities. Similarly, early pregnancy rates have an impact on school attendance, and it's estimated that only 45% of young Indigenous mothers complete secondary school. Despite this, government funding has traditionally favoured boys' programs (approximately 66%).

To effectively address intergenerational disadvantage, we must support girls to prioritise their education and empower themselves.

The Aspire program has two main aims: Firstly, we are able to assist the students to fill any gaps that may exist in their education through diagnostic assessments. This allows our tutors to identify weak areas and set individual programs to fill those areas. Secondly and importantly, we provide female mentors that the students can identify with. By seeing other Aboriginal women complete school and go onto fulfilling careers they can see what is possible.

Employment provides both financial stability for their future and also a benefit for their mental health. Studies show that having a sense of purpose in one's life is of great importance. "Today a reader, tomorrow a leader" is the motto of the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation. Our Aspire program goes a long way to fulfilling our mission.

We have surveyed parents and students recently for feedback. One student's father said he believed that tutoring was important and that he thought the program was a valuable resource: "Nicole was able to complete all of her times tables and got all 20 questions right on the test today. She was very pleased with her progress."





# Melbourne Tutoring

## JO CAMPBELL, Melbourne Co-ordinator

I am a teacher of over 30 years, with experience in a variety of educational settings.

A particular focus of my working life has been tutoring First Nations students in the inner areas of Melbourne. This aspect of my professional career has afforded me the opportunity to seek the advice from and assistance of the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation on a regular basis.

### CASE STUDY

As two Grade 6 students transition from primary to secondary school, I have had pause to reflect on their progress, as I have been tutoring both from Grade 1, including remote learning during the pandemic.

Confidence in written and oral expression is particularly evident, both students demonstrating consistent growth and achievement, academically and their inclusion in leadership roles. Individually they have acknowledged that tutoring has been an important factor in their progress over the six years of the ALF sponsored program.

Personally, I believe that the educational support was crucial post pandemic, the targeted assistance fostering a renewed enthusiasm for and commitment to learning.

### ANECDOTAL REFLECTIONS FROM STUDENTS

*"I really like that when I work with Jo. I can take time to work out what needs to be done, because it can take me a long time to 'get it'".*

*"Over the years the benefit has been in my level being higher every year when we do 'Essential Assessments' (a curriculum online program tracking progress throughout schooling years). When I started I was always Level 2. Now it's 3.5. I think the extra help should be every day!"*

(Sally, Grade 5)

*"My handwriting and narrative writing skills are better because we have time to work one-on-one. I feel valued and respected. I really like the different Literacy activities we do and the tests show how much I have improved."*

(Layla, Grade 6)

*"I enjoy the Literacy games we play to explain stuff and the tests show me what I can do. I feel more confident. I really like the stickers too!"*

(Beth, Grade 3)

\*Student's name changed



## ALF Students at University

In recent years, Aboriginal students have been entering TAFE and University in ever-increasing numbers. As we have noted an important task for the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation is to encourage students to stay on long enough that they can enter TAFE (Year 10) or University (Year 12). In 2023, 46% of Indigenous Australians were reported to have acquired or were in the process of acquiring a post-school qualification. This is up from only 19.7% in 2001.

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation has itself played a key role in assisting its former students undertake further study. In 2010, our student Kanaura Bell successfully completed VCE and undertook the first two years of a physiotherapy course at La Trobe University. She was then recruited by the University of Western Australia to enter their School of Medicine where she completed her MBBS and now works as a GP at Port Hedland in Western Australia. Another student of ours Simon Ray, who completed VCE and then was accepted into a Law/Commerce Course at Monash University. He now works for the Aboriginal Legal Service. Closer to home is Keiah Cooper, who came to the ALF in Year 2, and stayed with us to VCE and eventually became a teacher. She has been the Chief Educator for Aboriginal students at a local prison and most recently has taken up a University position. These are only a few examples of the outcomes which can be achieved through our support.



# 2024 POETRY COMPETITION

The 2024 Poetry Competition had the theme of Sports, Games and Hobbies. We received our highest number of entries ever, including our first ever entry written in an Indigenous language. We were delighted to hear from several teachers that some of the most enthusiastic students were those who didn't usually enjoy reading and writing.

Congratulations to all prize-winners and thank you to all schools and students for submitting your beautiful poems. There is an extraordinary tradition of story-telling in Indigenous culture, and we hope this competition may have shown the different ways language can be used to tell our stories.

## ASTROPHOTOGRAPHY

Asteroid activity.

Stars orbit in the night sky.

Trying to take the best photos and try your best.

Relax while taking photos and enjoy the night sky.

Observe the night sky.

Phone camera is very useful.

Highlight midnight in the night sky.

Out bush taking beautiful night sky.

Terrific and deadly photo of night sky.

Overwhelming of stars.

Gigantic stars and planet.

Rapid shooting stars in the night sky.

An ambitious hobby.

Phones can take lots of photos.

Hope to take a great photo.

Years of doing this hobby.

**Lebron Coppin, Age 12**

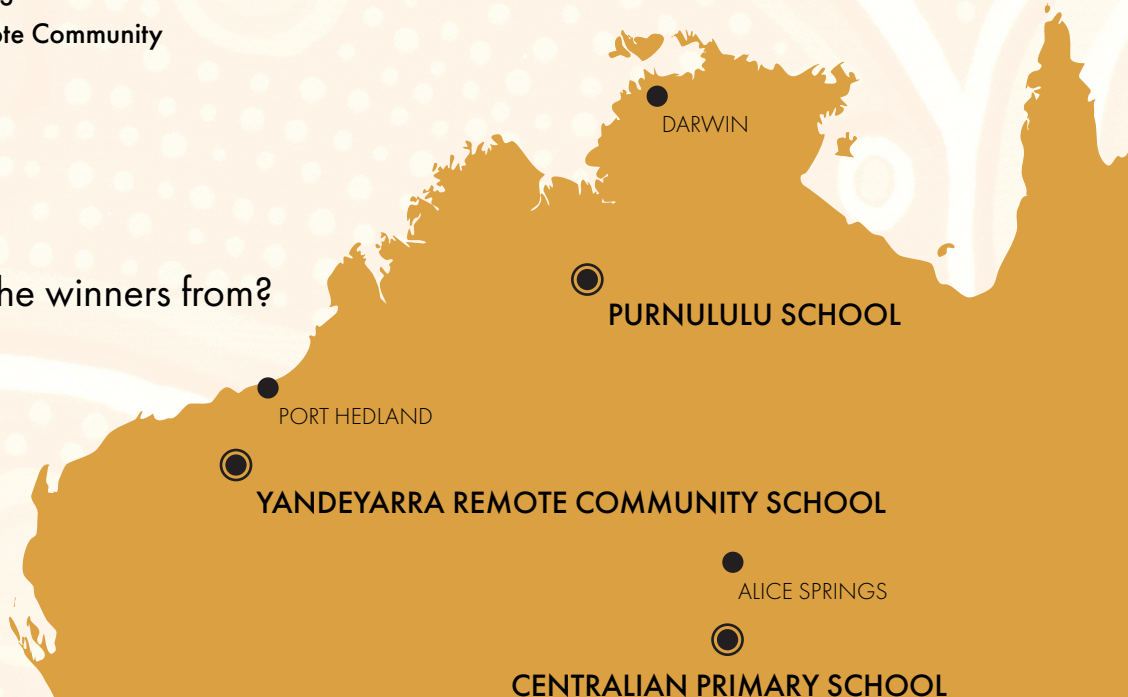
**Yandeyarra Remote Community School**

# 1ST PRIZE

## Lebron Coppin Astrophotography



Where are the winners from?



PURNULULU SCHOOL

YANDEYARRA REMOTE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

ALICE SPRINGS

CENTRALIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL



## Runner Up Winners

### **Music is my Medicine by Uliyah Forrester** | Centralian Primary School, Alice Springs, NT

Yep, music is my medicine,  
Music lives in me, I live in music  
RnB, hip hop  
Rapping and rhyming,  
It takes me through life  
In good times and bad times  
Lyrics memorized  
And sung often  
When I hear the music,  
I can't help but sing  
I don't need to dance  
I feel relaxed  
I feel calm  
I feel safe  
When I feel the music

I am the music  
I turn my headphones up  
As loud as they will go  
And no, I will not turn them down  
I'm always in need of music  
Magic melodies flowing through my mind  
Golden genres moving through my ears  
I see the chords in my eyes  
Music makes me stronger  
It gives me a reason to live  
It takes me to another world, far from reality  
Without music I would be lost  
I'm married to music,  
By my side it will stay.  
It follows me wherever I go,

To the ocean and back  
Amongst the birds  
And back to my room  
Now I'm asleep  
Music lives in me,  
I live in music  
Night 'n' Day  
Wherever I am  
Music is my medicine  
Music is the only cure to my  
depression.

### **Ball Game by Amelia Clifton Pinlay** | Purnululu School, East Kimberly region, WA

Gija Language

Belegan thebaj nginiyit boorljany,  
wayini-wa jarliji gany,  
gamboot ngimima marlan,  
marrarn wiji ngini jarlan.  
Dambi yah-ngerram jiyilem,  
wiji berrani niyiwa biyirrin.  
Garda-gardawooya wiki nginiyin.  
Jirrawoony warang-gan da nginiyi,  
moon-goon lawoorr wanema ni.  
Dany boorljany bany jiyiling,  
bardal nginiward, giying-nia.  
Yag-ngeny jiyileny bib nginema,  
boorljany wiji wanema,  
marran biyirrin.  
Yilgiya wanema boorljany baya.

*From the middle he hit the ball,  
that's when his team mate,  
grabbed it with his hand,  
he ran off in the clearing.  
All the opposition men,  
ran on the northside,  
he ran really fast,  
One of the other players ran very fast,  
He grabbed the player with the ball around the  
waist.  
The player with the ball, fell down on the wet ground,  
The other player picked up the ball & ran,  
Across the northside,  
He was a good shot he got a goal with the ball.*

## Bookmark Art

Creating art is part of the Aboriginal culture going back many thousands of years. It is used to convey their important cultural stories through the generations. There are recurring symbols and icons through their artwork which have deep meaning in Indigenous culture. These symbols are used to convey knowledge of the land, events and beliefs of the Indigenous people.

We want to thank Karen, one of our supporters who obtained some beautiful painted handmade bookmarks during her travels in the Alice Springs region and donated them to us. They show many different symbols, patterns and objects with lovely colours. Some have titles such as 'Women Dreaming' and 'Bush Tucker'. They are now on display in our Ballarat and Melbourne offices.





# WORLD LITERACY SUMMIT 2025

In April 2025 the World Literacy Summit will take place in Oxford, England. This is the largest literacy conference in the world which attracts over one thousand literacy professionals, bringing together educators, policymakers, innovators, and advocates from over 85 countries to collaborate on impactful solutions that promote literacy and learning around the world.

The Literacy Summit also attracts at least two hundred literacy organisations both Governmental and non-Governmental, not to mention International organizations such as the United Nations and charities including Oxfam, The Ford Foundation, The Gates Foundation and many others.

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation, which was one of the founding partners of the Summit, helped establish the first World Literacy Summit in 2012 and it has been held every two years since, with the exception of the COVID years. Many key discoveries and developments have been made due to the Summit. Not least of these has been the settlement of the “whole of word” versus “phonics” dispute over literacy teaching methods in favour of phonics. Another important discovery was publicised at the 2023 conference when a team from Harvard had found a physical reason in the brain for people who have dyslexia and certain other reading disorders. This involved the size of the cortex a small gland between the two hemispheres of the brain. When this was particularly narrow it tended to affect both reading skills and issues involving writing letters and words, particularly characterised by students who wrote S’s the wrong way or confused “d’s” with “b’s”.

All these developments have had a powerful impact on the teaching of literacy around the world.

As in previous years the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation will be presenting papers and hopefully making international educators aware of developments taking place in Australian Education.

Perhaps the most publicised part of the World Literacy Summit is the presentation of the “World Literacy Awards”. These awards recognize fine work and developments in the area of literacy and are the literacy equivalent of the Nobel Prize. The awards at the last Summit were presented by Princess Laurentine of the Netherlands and this year Queen Camilla has been invited to present the awards. Many readers will be aware that she has also founded her own Literacy Charity for the UK and the Commonwealth.

**If you are interested in attending in person or online, visit [worldliteracysummit.org](http://worldliteracysummit.org)**



## WORLD LITERACY SUMMIT





# BEQUESTS



The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation is most grateful to individuals or organisations who choose to make a bequest. We would recommend that you inform your solicitor to include a bequest in your will – If you prefer, you can use the form provided below.

I \_\_\_\_\_ wish to bequeath \_\_\_\_\_ dollars to the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation.

I would like this bequest to contribute towards:

- A library for a remote school
- Extending the tutoring program
- To provide a school or post-school scholarship
- All work currently undertaken by the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation
- Other (please specify)

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Please forward a copy of this form to your solicitor and a copy to the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation at [info@aboriginalliteracyfoundation.org](mailto:info@aboriginalliteracyfoundation.org)

or  
Ross House  
P.O. Box 315 Flinders Lane  
Melbourne, Victoria, 8009

We thought it would be interesting for our readers to hear of some of the wonderful bequests we have received in recent times and what it can mean for our Indigenous students (names have been changed).

**Betty Braithwaite**, who has spent a lifetime as a nurse, a matron and finally as the proprietor of an aged care facility left a bequest to the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation of approximately \$50,000 and asked that it might be spent for a library at a remote Aboriginal School in Northern Australia. Not only were we able to fulfill her request, but we were able to establish two libraries one in Katherine and one in a remote settlement 150 kilometres south known as Coolabah. This has made such a difference to the students, and both libraries are open to the

entire community centering as they do on subjects of interest to Aboriginal people. (Aboriginal biography, sport, animals, nature and traditional history and art).

Mrs. **Rachel Wenzel**, who had been married to a businessman in Melbourne left \$100,000 to the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation, and asked that it might be spent on fees for an Aboriginal girl to attend a private school. As she did not elaborate, we offered this as a scholarship at one of the Aboriginal Co-Ops, and found that several girls were keen to participate. We contacted a number of private girls schools, all of whom indicated that they would contribute towards the fees and ensure that the girls complete their education. We were even able to use some of the money towards uniforms.

**Jim McArthur**, retired farmer in Western Victoria made a generous donation of \$20,000. He had Aboriginal employees on his farm for many years and felt that he'd like to contribute something towards young Aboriginal people interested in working on the land but who had poor literacy skills. We approached the Aboriginal Community in several country towns and found that there was a group of young boys and girls who did want to work on the land but whose literacy skills were not up to entry into a TAFE or an Agricultural College. Special classes in this town were held and were well attended for about a year. At least three of the students were able to enter TAFE at the culmination of the program. This would not have been possible without such a wonderful donation.



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