

ALFABET

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ABORIGINAL LITERACY FOUNDATION

WINTER 2024

FROM LITTLE THINGS
BIG THINGS GROW

Indigenous girls
blossoming in the
Aspire Program

Page 6



IN THIS ISSUE



BOOK PROGRAMS	4
HEALTHY LIVING SERIES	4
DISTRIBUTION PARTNERS	4
BOOKS TO SOUTH AUSTRALIA	5
ASPIRE PROGRAM	6
TUTORING	8
VICTORIAN TUTORING	8
VALE SUE BACON	8
OTHER ALF NEWS	9
SCHOLARSHIPS	9
POETRY COMPETITION	9

CEO'S REPORT

Dear friends and supporters of the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation,

The first half year of 2024 has been extremely successful for the ALF. We've managed to initiate several new and important projects which we feel will have a long term impact on the Aboriginal community. Our VCE Program is aimed to provide support and tutoring for Indigenous boys and girls who are hoping to go to university next year. Often these young people suffer severe disadvantage, living in homes that are affected by financial, social, and health issues. Often it is hard to find somewhere to study in a house that may be shared by more than one family. Our VCE Program not only provides funding but also after school tutoring at our Melbourne office, or at the student's home if that is more appropriate.

The reopening of our office at Ross House in January was an important event for the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation. When the ALF was founded, approximately thirty years ago, we were very grateful to be offered an office at Ross House at very low rent. Gradually, we outgrew the office and moved to other premises but we always intended to return at some stage. The main use for the Ross House office in the city of Melbourne is for the VCE Program and this is undertaken by our Year 12 tutor, Jo Campbell who has wide experience teaching VCE and Aboriginal students.

I am pleased to be able to report that we are now tutoring five girls from a remote part of Arnhem Land boarding at Monivae College in Hamilton in Western Victoria. Our past experience in contributing towards young Indigenous Australians coming to board at schools in the south of the country has been extremely positive, and we have in the past supported a student who has gone on to complete a medical degree at the University of Western Australia.

Many of you will be aware that 2024 marked the 5th anniversary of our ground-breaking Books to the North Program. This program, which we set up at the request of remote Principals in the Northern Territory has now been taken up by three State Education Departments and at least two other Aboriginal charities. It is one of the roles of charities and not for profit organisations to take risks and start programs that Government Education Departments would

be unwilling to undertake. I'm pleased to report that our program, which has centred on Northern Territory, Northern Queensland and Northern Western Australia (approximately 150 schools) has now been extended to Northern South Australia with many schools joining our program so far.

Also, I want to make a special thank you to several important bequests that have been made to Aboriginal Literacy Foundation over the past six months. I would particularly like to thank the Flegg Family for the gift made in honour of Dorothy Flegg and also the magnificent bequest from the Estate of Patricia Hughes. We wish to acknowledge both Dorothy and Patricia, not only for their bequests, but their long-standing support of our organisation and their commitment to Indigenous youth for many years.

Finally, all of us at the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation are most grateful for the wonderful support we have received over the past six months. It is not usually known that the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation receives no Government money whatsoever (not since 2003). We are well aware that these are not easy times and many of our supporters are challenged financially, so we are especially grateful for any contribution, big and small.

Thank you once again and very best wishes,

Anthony Cree

CEO

Below: Advisory Council Chair, Anne Patmore with Tony Cree.



BOOK PROGRAMS

HEALTHY LIVING SERIES

There have been some great developments in several areas of our book distribution programs this year. Our network of partners continues to grow, and most notably, we are proud to have established a relationship with the Earbus Foundation, who work in West Australia to reduce instances of middle ear infection. The Earbus Foundation see around 4,000 Aboriginal and at-risk children each year at around 110 sites. As supporters may already be aware, in 2022, we published our own children's book, *What We Hear*, to encourage better hygiene and reduce middle ear infections. We were able to provide the Earbus Foundation with hundreds of copies of *What We Hear*, and each bus has copies of our book to share with children, as well as more to be delivered to families and schools across 9 regions.

What We Hear has also recently been distributed to the Ear Health department of Health Communities in Collingwood, Victoria, to provide to children who visit their clinic.

We have also distributed sets of our Healthy Living Series to other health centres including the Royal Children's Hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Centre in Melbourne, the Shoalhaven

Maternal and Infant Health Centre in Nowra, and the Cumberland Hospital in Parramatta.

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation is proud to support the Strong Born campaign: an initiative of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and the Foundation of Alcohol Research and Education (FAEE). The campaign seeks to raise awareness of the risks of drinking alcohol while pregnant and breastfeeding and seeks to distribute 1000 baby bags to expectant Aboriginal mothers which contain nappy bags, nursing tops, baby hats, muslins, nappies, and barrier cream. The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation will be providing a copy of one of our Healthy Living Series books for each baby bag.

These books fill a great need among our Aboriginal community. By representing Aboriginal people and relatable environments in our illustrations, children have the opportunity to see themselves on the page. The benefit of feeling included in these stories cannot be overstated.

The Healthy Living Series has remained immensely popular and has remained a free service for all Aboriginal families and all organisations working with Aboriginal children.

We have been distributing the Healthy Living Series since 2012, and plan to publish a 6th book in the series in 2025.

DISTRIBUTION PARTNERS

TAFE NSW

Griffith, NSW

Brimbank Community and Civic Centre

Sunshine, VIC

Child Protection and Family Support

Broome, WA

SNAICC

North Woollongong, NSW

Mungabareena

Wondonga, VIC

Benevolent

East Maitland, NSW

Health Communities

Collingwood, VIC

Uniting Burnside

North Parramatta, NSW

Kokatha Aboriginal Corporation RTNBC

Port Augusta, SA

Royal Children's Hospital

Parkville, VIC

Queen Elizabeth Centre

Noble Park, SA

Shoalhaven Aboriginal Maternal Health

Nowra, NSW

Granny Glasgow Education and Care

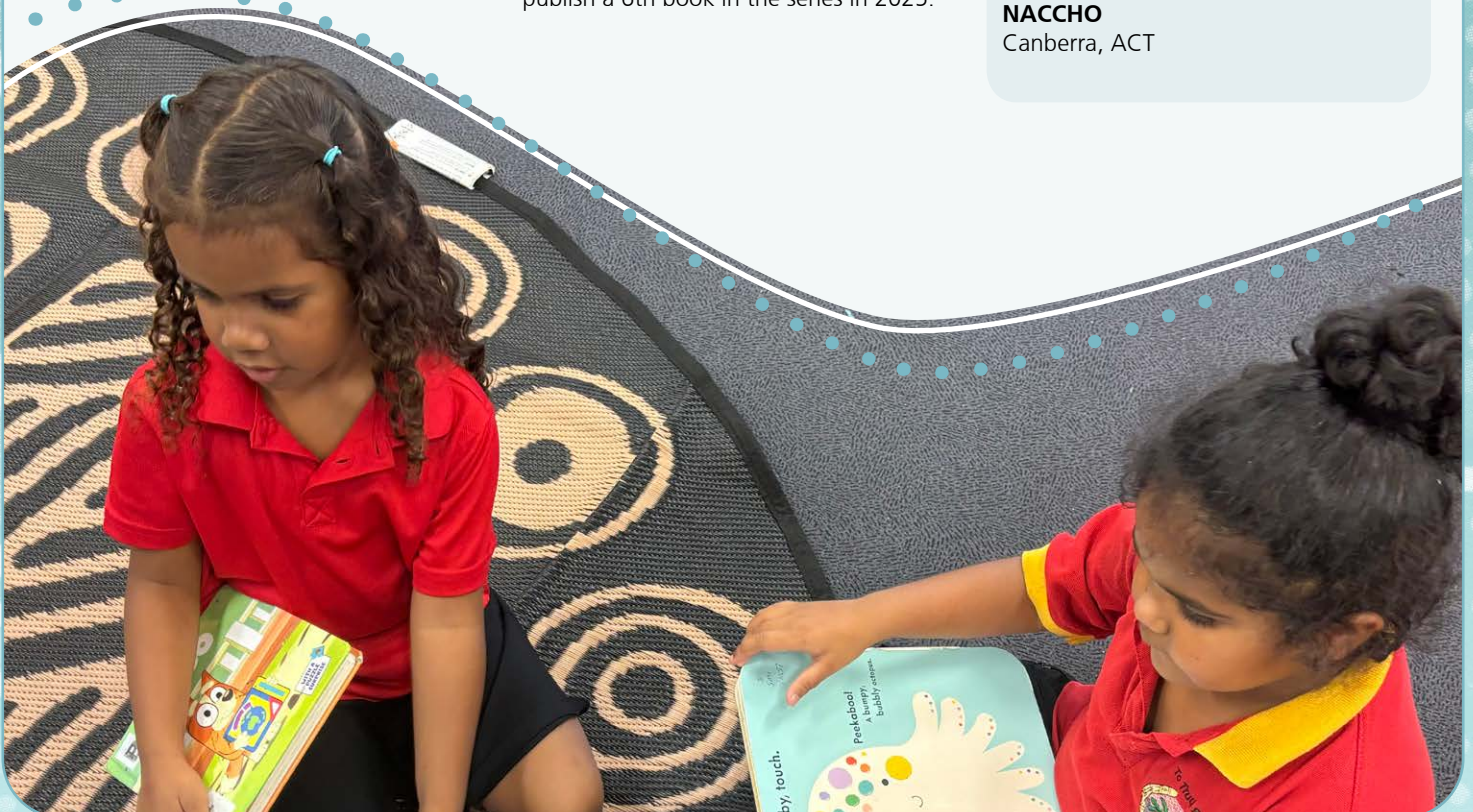
Canarvan, WA

Cumberland Hospital

North Parramatta, NSW

NACCHO

Canberra, ACT



BINJIN KUNWOK

In Australia, there are more than 250 Indigenous languages and 800 dialects. Each language is specific to a particular place and people. Language, culture and the Land are intricately intertwined. Sadly, 90% of First Nations languages in Australia are considered endangered.

Bininj Kunwok is a language spoken by the Nininj people in Western Arnhem Land. There are six dialects of Bininj Kunwok of which Kunwinjku is the most widely spoken. Some time ago, we were approached by the Bininj Kunwok Language Centre to assist in publishing three books in these six dialects. We are very glad to announce we are moving forward with the project by publishing three books in Kunwinjku. We hope to print the books in the other five dialects later in the year.

All books will be written in both the Bininj Kunwok language and English. While direct translation of Indigenous languages is problematic, these texts will provide context and a valuable reference point by which each language can be better understood. It is not uncommon for Arnhem Land children to speak three or even four languages. We feel this is a sensible approach, with benefits not only in the literacy of children speaking Binjin Kunwok, but as a way of preserving language and the treasures there within.

BOOKS TO SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Following the success of our Books to the North program, we have identified that there is also a great need for books in remote and regional schools in South Australia. In the smaller schools, which often struggle with a lack of resources, there is often a lack of variety in the reading material found in libraries. To observe a map of South Australia, it is clear that there are many remote towns and communities in the vast state which is bordered by the Simpson and Great Victoria deserts. In April, we approached 24 remote schools offering them children's books for their libraries. The response has been great with

positive feedback such as, "this will enable our children more access to different literature." And, "The acquisition of language skills, fostering imagination and creativity is essential". As these schools have a good percentage of Aboriginal children, we are sure this will help us fill our mission of supporting their education. We plan to begin sending parcels of books to South Australia in June, including several sets of our Healthy Living Series books. We look forward to hearing their positive response and sharing this with our supporters.



ASPIRE PROGRAM

Our Aspire Program is now in its second year and proving very successful. We are most grateful to Christine Beswick for undertaking the organising of the program. We now have the program operating in Ballarat, Hamilton, and Bairnsdale.

Indigenous women face a range of obstacles which may stand in the way of their advancement in education and post-school lives. We believe literacy is crucial for both boys and girls, yet traditionally, the bulk of Government funding (around 66%) has been reserved for programs benefiting Indigenous boys.

Only 41% of Indigenous girls attend school consistently. There are many issues which come to bear on an Indigenous girl's ability to attend school. It is often the case, that a girl may be expected to take a greater role in domestic duties in the home. Rates of pregnancy also has a similar impact: it is estimated that only 45% of young Indigenous mothers have finished secondary school. These are just two examples which may prevent an Indigenous girl from prioritising her own education, and setting her own academic or career goals.

Most concerning, however, is that Indigenous women are 33 times more likely to experience hospitalisation due to instances of domestic violence. We believe, the greatest tool in combating some intergenerational disadvantage, is to uphold women who have broken cycles and empowered themselves. Indigenous young women deserve a range of tools and resources to help them overcome the challenges of adolescence and womanhood.

The Aspire program runs throughout the year and regularly brings together groups of Indigenous girls aged between 10 and 16 years. Participants in the program are mainly referred to us from households and schools already known to the Foundation via programs and partnerships. However, the program is also promoted to nearby schools and communities to attract new applicants.

First and foremost, we aim to see the participants of this program meet and surpass the universal literacy and numeracy tests undertaken in Australian schools. Secondly, we aim to assist the girls in their progression and successful completion of secondary school. And lastly, while

undertaking their studies, the program also aims to provide excellent mentoring and pastoral care for the girls. These resources provide another avenue of support, and we hope, a source of inspiration. We aim to assist the girls in reaching their academic and personal goals, and to become the leaders of tomorrow.

As the adage goes, *"If you educate a boy, you educate an individual. If you educate a woman, you educate a village."*

The Aspire program is only made possible through the support of our generous donors, corporate sponsors, and benefactors. We and the girls in the Aspire program say "Thank You."

Below: Mentor and former ALF student, Keiah Meddings-Cooper, with some ASPIRE students.



HOW IT WORKS



A student is referred to the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation.



Testing undertaken to determine student's level of literacy and identify any specific needs.



The student is encouraged to set goals and consider what to prepare for in their pathway to success.



Students commence weekly sessions with Aboriginal Literacy Foundation tutors.



Students given access to Indigenous mentors who exemplify positive work and lifestyle habits.



Motivational presentations held each term to inspire and maintain engagement.

Upon being referred to the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation by a school, family member, or other agency, students will receive testing to determine their level of literacy.

Tutors will then discuss with the student what their areas of concern are and what they hope to achieve. Students will also be encouraged to set goals. If desired, parents may also discuss progress and study plans with tutors.

Tutoring takes place in the form of one-hour sessions, where there is no more than two students to a teacher.

Students will be given access to a mentor to provide encouragement and ongoing support.

Motivational presentations will be held at the culmination of each term, to inspire and also develop associated skills, such as writing CVs, job interviews, time management, and budgeting.



TUTORING

VICTORIAN TUTORING

In its early days, the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation existed exclusively as a tutorial support service throughout regional Victoria, in areas such as Clunes and Mount Dorret. Through this work, many of our connections with community leaders were formed and our commitment to these communities remains strong. The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation now hold after-school tutoring in three regional centres in Victoria: Hamilton, Bairnsdale, and Ballarat.

In Hamilton, classes are co-ordinated by Colleen Paige. The group has recently been joined by two new students who are boarding from Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.

Ballarat classes are held from Monday to Thursday throughout the school term. Children are usually grouped in ages (or families) and there is no more than two students per tutor. We also offer a taxi service to students who have difficulty attending classes and offer all students afternoon tea before sessions begin.

Ballarat also hosts our regional Aspire Program for Indigenous girls aged between 10 and 16. We acknowledge the efforts of Christine for co-ordinating this program.

In Melbourne, tutoring is co-ordinated by Jo Campbell. We continue to work with

students in the suburbs of Collingwood and Fitzroy. Jo has also commenced our VCE Program held at our inner city base at Ross House, which we are very excited to further develop. We also have an extensive collection of historical and literary resources held here and we hope students will benefit from this collection.

Feedback from parents and teachers has been very encouraging. Tutors work closely with parents to discuss progress of students as well as areas of improvement and study goals. We appreciate all our tutors for their commitment to our work and the advancement of Indigenous youth.

ONLINE TUTORING

Our partnership with Need a Tutor has allowed us to extend our reach into new locations in Australia. Founder Bronwyn Covill has been instrumental in working with regional connectivity issues, as well as liaising with state education departments to allow access to this platform.

We have worked with classes in remote Western Australia, in the town of Wiluna, and we now support students in regional Queensland and New South Wales.

We are most grateful to Bronwyn for her work and commitment to Indigenous young people.

VALE SUE BACON

Sue Bacon was a Yorta Yorta woman who for five years (from 2015 to 2020) co-ordinated our after-school tutoring at Bacchus Marsh, in Western Victoria.

Sue pioneered the idea of providing Aboriginal students with an afternoon tea as part of the program. Many students turned up on their bikes for the afternoon tea, only to stay and be tutored and years later local teachers remarked how successful Sue had been when they had been singularly unable to make any headway with some of the students.

Another feature of Sue's approach was to encourage parents to take part in the program, and while this seemed unorthodox, in fact, it was the forefront of an idea which has taken root in Northern Territory schools. Students were often proud and delighted to have their parent or uncle taking part in the teaching process, and often at the same time, telling wonderful stories of the old days, and some of the myths and legends that are an important part of the Aboriginal culture.

It was important for Sue to make the children feel welcome in this environment, and she endeavoured to celebrate each of their birthdays and incorporate seasonal holidays into the classes.

Thank you and vale Sue Bacon.

BELOW: Student with Anne Patmore.



OTHER ALF NEWS

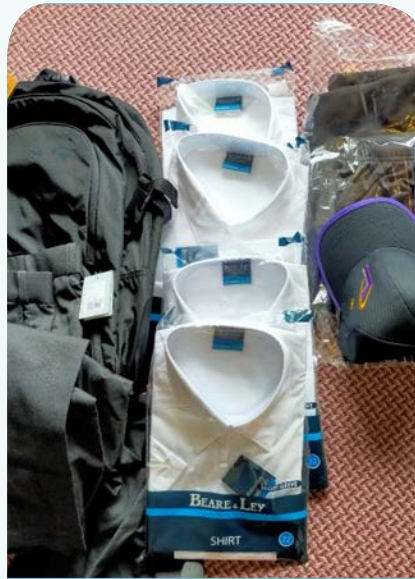
SCHOLARSHIPS

The change from Year 6 to Year 7 at a large high school is one of the biggest changes a young person will experience. Many of us will remember the sometimes traumatic move from a smaller school, where we had one consistent teacher in the same classroom to an enormous school, with different teachers, and a new classroom to find every hour.

It is not just a change for the student but a huge expense for the parents. There is the high cost of uniforms and text books, plus often the need for a laptop computer. This can easily add up to \$2,000.00 or more.

With thanks to our generous donors we were able to award financial scholarships to several of our students that were experiencing the transition to Yr 7 in 2024. While Australia provides very low cost high school education, extra costs are often a factor that can discourage families who are already struggling financially. This may also affect attitudes towards higher education.

The requirement for completion of Year 10 for entry to a traineeship, for example is often not achieved due to the family's



Resources provided by the ALF for Year 7 transition.

financial limitations. By providing this financial assistance, we feel it is a very important tool to assist students to successfully continue their education.

POETRY COMPETITION

The ALF's 2024 poetry competition will be based on 'sports, games and hobbies'. The aim is to receive as many poems as possible about the activities children do for fun, especially in remote and regional Australia where the ALF's Books to the North program chiefly operates.

Entrants can write about anything that they enjoy doing, from biking, fishing, gaming, footy, soccer, collecting, or any activity they find fun! The form of the poem is also free. They may be rhyming, non-rhyming, acrostics, free verse, or even non-written in the form of videos, songs or recordings.

All the approximately 150 schools which are participating in the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation's Books to the North program have been invited to submit poems, and we are eagerly awaiting the poems that students submit.

Last year's poetry competition theme was 'pets and animals', for which the winner was the poem 'Manangrida Mud Crab' by Jacob Adams.

BELOW: Winner of the 2023 Poetry Competition, Jacob Adams.



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)

Please forward a copy of this form to your solicitor and a copy to the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation at info@aboriginalliteracyfoundation.org

or

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

Sally Woiniski was a hospital matron for nearly thirty years. During this time, she encountered many Aboriginal women who she felt were poorly educated, particularly in matters of health. She had long felt that more of an effort should be made to help Aboriginal women and their children in this important area. She gave a bequest of \$50,000.00 to be spent on health education for Aboriginal women and children. Part of this bequest was able to be spent on publishing our most recent book to prevent ear and nose-infections often resulting in life-threatening extra-cranial infections.

George Edwards had owned an engineering business in regional New South Wales. He had employed many Aboriginal people over several decades and was well aware that poor literacy skills and also the lack of any TAFE training held these hardworking people back. George made a bequest of \$20,000.00 to be spent on literacy in the workplace with particular emphasis in the Western New South Wales area.

Martha Coats was a librarian for more than forty years. She had heard about the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation sending books to Northern Australia and founding school libraries. She left a bequest in her will that \$25,000.00 of her superannuation funds be spent on founding at least one school library in a remote area with particular emphasis on providing Aboriginal literature where possible.

PHILANTHROPIC SPONSORS



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 THE READINGS FOUNDATION
 FOUNDATION FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL RENEWAL
 WELLINGTON MANAGEMENT FOUNDATION
 HAROLD MITCHELL FOUNDATION
 SANOFI
 MARY MACKILLOP TODAY
 IOOF HOLDINGS



ALF VORTECH CAP
\$25

TOTE BAG
\$40

MIXED GREETING CARDS 10 PACK
\$20

T-SHIRT
\$35

WRISTBANDS
\$5

LIBRARY SATCHEL
\$20



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