

# ALFABET

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ABORIGINAL LITERACY FOUNDATION

## Supporting Budding Readers



WINTER 2026

# Winter 2026

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# CEO's Report

I want to start by saying how grateful we are for all the support we receive from our individual supporters. As significant as the corporate and philanthropists are, it is our supporters who allow us to see how many Australians wish for dramatic improvements in education outcomes and opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

I would like to mention one donor in particular who recently gave the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation a wonderful bequest at a critical time. I'm sure you've been aware of the succession of floods taken place over the last six months in Northern Australia. The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation supports 156 remote schools and a large proportion have been affected by flooding and its subsequent residue of ruined buildings, lost equipment and students unable to attend school. The bequest has enabled us to act in this area, in particular, with the replacement of books, library equipment and much of the other items of classroom life.

Our work continues with students from Arnhem Land who are studying at boarding schools in Western Victoria. Through your generosity we are able to offer these students extra tuition to support their schooling. It's hard to imagine the change from living in a remote part of Australia to a busy boarding school, and it's incredibly brave of these young people to move so far from home in order to pursue education opportunities. Often these students speak of a desire to return to their communities and work as teachers themselves, or even nurses and doctors. We are committed to supporting these students as they work towards these aspirations.

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation supports the World Literacy Summit that takes place every two years at Oxford University, England. This conference is probably the most important international conference on literacy. Some of the discoveries that have come of this conference include a famous paper by the Mayo Clinic and Harvard University identifying a physiological reasons for conditions such as dyslexia.

It is not generally known that an important part of our work also takes place with inner-city Aboriginal children. We have a major program underway in Melbourne based at Collingwood, and this will soon be expanded to include a secondary school program in the Preston region.

This year, we are also looking forward to further publications in our Healthy Living Series. This series of books explores a number of areas of children's life and health and uses Aboriginal artists and writers. Each book is quite short and has a cartoon feel to it which appeals to early readers. Our most recent book entitled 'What we Hear' was at the request of the Royal Australian College of Surgeons as a response to the high level of Aboriginal children suffering from middle-ear infections. The next book, titled 'Feeling Good at School' will be written for a slightly older age group and provide easy-to-read advice on how manage their school experience.

Finally, a special thanks to those kind people who donate books to our warehouse in Ballarat, Victoria. Children's books, particularly ones with illustrations, are so helpful and we are told by teachers they are often much more useful than computers and IT resources.

Thank you again from all of us at the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr Anthony Cree**

**CEO  
Aboriginal Literacy Foundation**



# Book Programs

## BOOKS TO THE NORTH

Books to the North is the ALF's flagship program. It spans four states and takes in over 156 schools in some of the most remote areas in the country.

The challenges these communities face was focused earlier in the year, when severe flooding hit areas of the Big Rivers region of the Northern Territory. Hundreds of homes in Katherine and Beswick were damaged and communities in the Daly River and Palumpa regions were under strict evacuation orders. We support dozens of schools in these regions, and have made contact in recent weeks to determine what support we can provide. In these regions, the words of Dorothea Mackellar's national epithet of a land of 'drought and flooding rains' are painfully real.

Another community we have worked with is a town called Punmu in the East Pilbara. Punmu is home to about 180 residents, and is 600 kilometres South East of Port Headland, and 1300 kilometres North East of Perth. The town is accessible by one unsealed road and during the wet season, the road is closed for weeks or even months at a time. The flooding is so predictable, that the community organises supplies to be delivered before the beginning of the wet season. When we consider educational disadvantage, we often consider financial

hardship and technological restrictions, but there is also a very real environmental challenge facing Indigenous communities in remote areas. This undoubtedly effects the quality of resources, and one can imagine in the Big Rivers region of the Northern Territory, much has been lost and will now need to be replaced. It is thanks to our supporters who provide us with wonderful books and also the financial capabilities to make these regular deliveries.

## NOTABLE RECIPIENTS

In addition to our Books to the North delivery schedule, the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation also provide many other schools, kindergartens, childcare and community organisations with books and learning resources. Among these recipients were the Adelaide Youth Court, Shoalhaven Aboriginal Maternal Infant Health Service, Novo Education Shoalhaven Campus and McAuley Community Services for Women, and Warragamba Silverdale Neighborhood Centre. We will also be contributing our Healthy Living Series books to included with NACCHO's Strong Born gift bags for new mothers.



**4** STATES



**156** SCHOOLS



**10,000+ BOOKS**



## BOOK DONATIONS

While you will likely know of the reach of the Books to the North program, the supporters who donate books to our organisation should also be acknowledged. Many schools and organisations hold book drives throughout the year, and as our only warehouse is in Ballarat, Victoria, many pay for these books to be delivered or travel here to deliver them personally. From there, we thoroughly check the quality of the books and separate them into age groups of 0-4, 5-9, 10-14 and 15-18 to ensure we are sending the most appropriate reading material. These books are then sent to the 156 schools participating in the Books to the North program, as well as community organisations, child care centres, and other schools and kindergartens. In May 2026, we received a significant donation of books

from Will Davies in Sydney. He personally packed 15 boxes and was able to enlist former Wallabies captain, Nick Farr-Jones to sponsor the delivery costs.

We would also like to acknowledge the efforts of Danya, a Year 11 student from Sydney, and founder of A Little Library, who donated 11 boxes of books.

Our thanks go to all those individuals and organisations who donate books to the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation and make this program such a huge success.

In the future, we hope to have warehouses in capital cities to make these book donations easier, particularly for non-Victorian supporters.

*Note: Occasionally, the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation needs to pause book donations in order to make room in our warehouse. Please check [aboriginalliteracyfoundation.org/how-you-can-help/book-donation-guidelines/](http://aboriginalliteracyfoundation.org/how-you-can-help/book-donation-guidelines/) to confirm we are accepting books and contact [info@aboriginalliteracyfoundation.org](mailto:info@aboriginalliteracyfoundation.org) prior to holding a book drive.*

## 2026 ALF POETRY COMPETITION

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation will soon be inviting schools participating in its Books to the North program to take part in our annual Poetry Competition.

Last year, the theme was 'Food, Glorious Food', and the winning poem was awarded to Year 9 student, Brayden Molloy. This year the theme will be '**All Creatures Great and Small**', and we are asking students to write about their favourite animals. We look forward to reading about hummingbirds and humpbacks and everything in between. Once again, we encourage all forms of poetry and also First Nation language entries.

After receiving feedback from schools, this year, we will also create two separate age tiers for entrants, and will be awarding a winner for both a Primary School and Secondary School entry.



# Tutoring Programs

## AFTER SCHOOL TUTORING

We have got 2026 off to a good start with weekly Literacy Tutoring being conducted in Hamilton, Ballarat, Bairnsdale, as well as the Melbourne suburbs of Collingwood and Preston. Our fully qualified Victorian Registered Teachers engage with the students weekly during the school term where tutoring is conducted for both Primary and Secondary students. The individual attention we are able to provide allows us to target any areas of concern and provide tutoring that is specific to their needs. The focus is on reading, writing, spelling and comprehension, with some support in numeracy as well. Lessons include literacy-focused games and activities drawing on calendar events such as Easter, Mother's Day and NAIDOC Week.

We find the use of diagnostic testing to be very useful in identifying needs of students. These include The Burt Word Reading Test, South Australian Spelling Test and a Silent Reading Test. Through using these periodically, we are able to chart the student's progress and use it for reporting. We like to see students progress but often they are aware themselves, being much more able to keep up with school work and contribute to the classroom.

We have had very good attendance rates with the students keen to come each week. Seeing their progress during the year is encouraging for all – the students, parents and

ourselves. Earlier in the year, we were delighted to hear one of our regularly-attending students was awarded the role of Arts Captain at their school. We do like to see our students thrive in all areas and this was a great reward for her efforts.

## HAMILTON UPDATE

Here at Monivae College, Hamilton we run a scholarship program for students from a remote region of the Northern Territory. We currently have a student attending from Nungmariyunga in the West Daly Region, and she is completing year 8 and into her second full year at Monivae. I have been working with her on the Aspire program primarily in study time in boarding once or twice a week.

The program has given her support to be able to improve her literacy skills to a standard that allows her to access more of the curriculum with ease. As a result her confidence has grown both in the classroom and socially.

We are so proud of our students efforts, and so grateful to be able to deliver the Aspire Program to her as an extra support. We cannot wait to see more of her progress over the coming year, and look forward to partnering with the Aspire program as part of her ongoing schooling.

**Colleen Watt**

**Indigenous Student Co-ordinator/Teacher  
Hamilton**

## EDUCATION FOR MENTAL WELL-BEING

School and education, while obviously important for future career pathways, can also assist mental health in direct and indirect ways.

- 1) It builds coping and thinking skills - good education can strengthen problem-solving, emotional awareness, communication and critical thinking.
- 2) It improves life opportunities, job options, income stability, housing security and access to healthcare.
- 3) It increases mental health literacy. Education can help people recognise signs of anxiety, depression, burnout, or trauma, seek help earlier and understand treatment options.
- 4) It creates social connection and belonging. It can help provide friendships, mentors, role models, identity and support networks. Feeling connected can lower loneliness and buffer stress.



5) It can give structure and purpose. Learning gives many people a routine, goals, a sense of progress, hope for a brighter future. Literacy skills can grow and we hope to instill a lifelong love of learning.

Our goal is to bring the students up to the same literacy levels as their peers so they can advance through school, but simply remaining engaged in their education and connected to teachers and classmates is enormously important.

## LITERACY AND HERITAGE CAMPS

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation, after a pause of several years, will be reintroducing their very popular weekend Literacy and Heritage Camps. Unlike earlier programs, the Camp will not be residential, where students stayed overnight. Instead students will be collected by bus in the mornings and taken home at the end of the day. This program can only be based at one site at a time and we will be recommencing in Ballarat, in

Western Victoria. The basic outline of the Camps is that the first three hours each day are spent with small-group literacy tuition. Through testing, we establish the literacy needs of each student. After lunch, we invite elders and parents to lead the heritage component of the Camps. This can include painting, story-telling, and weaving in native flax. These are all skills which are still available but if not passed on could easily be lost. Other may wish to talk about local cultural traditions and stories relating to country. Some of these stories have been passed down orally for possibly thousands of years: for example the Wauthaurong people, describe in their stories a time when the mountains “spat fire”. Several years ago geologists established that these hills had been most recently active volcanoes twelve to fifteen thousand years ago. The Wauthaurong people had kept the story alive for literally thousands of years.

Another feature of the Literacy and Heritage Camps has been the opportunity for children to go horse-riding in the afternoon. The horse-riding usually takes place on the final day, and is a great reward for the students’ effort.

It is now the case, that the generation of students who first attended the original Literacy and Heritage Camps are bringing their own children to tutoring. The Camps were an innovation which combine literacy studies with local culture and connection to country, and we feel sure it will be just as successful in the future.



# Other News

## ALF LOBBYING

An important aspect of any not-for-profit or charitable organisation is the role of lobbyist. Often a not-for-profit or charity can take on initiatives that a Government department or a school is unable to. It is often difficult for Government departments to employ new strategies due to the potential for political fallout. This means that Government programs are often very conservative in terms of the support which can be rolled out. Not-for-profits are often at the forefront of innovation, and the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation, have access to literacy initiatives from around the world through our relationships with the World Literacy Summit and World Literacy Council.

In recent years the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation has worked with Local, State and Federal Governments on issues that we consider important for the improved literacy of Aboriginal people. In 2019 and 2023, our CEO, Dr. Anthony Cree addressed the Federal Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Education. This can be seen in full on Commonwealth Parliament Hansard (the record of all undertakings in Parliament).

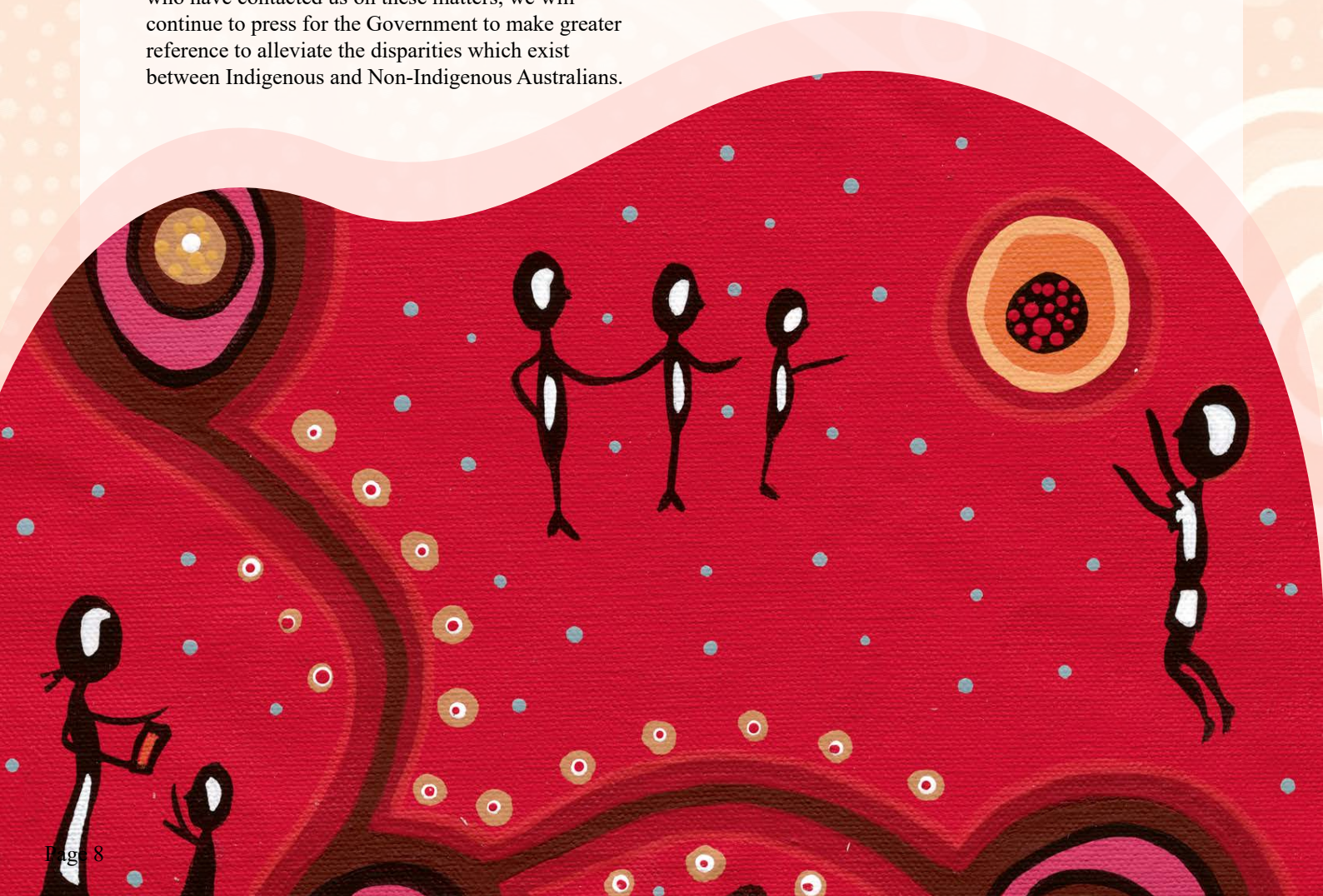
With the help of our wonderful supporters and others who have contacted us on these matters, we will continue to press for the Government to make greater reference to alleviate the disparities which exist between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians.

## ABORIGINAL ART COLLECTION

Over the last twenty years, the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation has acquired more than thirty paintings by well-known Aboriginal artists. Painting has also formed a strong component of the cultural work we undertake with students. Our teachers have included prominent Aboriginal artists Bill Blackall and Janet Curtain, who has worked with many local schools to help with their cultural programs.

If there is sufficient demand we will offer high quality prints of some of these paintings which will be available to purchase online. All proceeds from sales we go directly to supporting initiatives to raise literacy among Indigenous Australians.

Artwork created for the Healthy Living Series  
by renowned Aboriginal artist, Bibi Barba.



## FEELING GOOD AT SCHOOL

There was understandable disappointment with the release of latest NAPLAN results which showed that 70% of Year 5 Indigenous students in remote communities require reading assistance. It must be remembered, many of these students do not speak English at home, and it's common for children to speak three or even four Indigenous languages before beginning school. This doesn't mean we should not push for the best outcomes but it does suggest a different approach is often required. Haydon Staines from Charles Darwin university was recently quoted as saying:

“What really good readers have is a love for reading; what better way to create and foster a love for reading than to have texts that are interconnected, that are relatable, that are relevant and that are meaningful to you as an Indigenous student.”

This is essentially the philosophy which drives our programs: getting books into homes and producing engaging material for Indigenous young people. We are excited to be working on another title in our Healthy Living Series, 'Feeling Good at School'. This

book aims to provide kids with tools to manage their experience at school. This will include simple health advice such as having a good breakfast, breathing exercises and drinking plenty of water, and also suggest ways of managing difficult situations which may arise, such as bullying.

The illustrator of our most recent title, 'What We Hear', Tyrown Waigana has been engaged as illustrator.

We feel this will make a big contribution to the life of young Aboriginal Australians, and look forward to bringing you further updates throughout the year.



# Donating to the ALF

## Online Donations

As a fully-registered and independent charity, we rely on the support of our donors to achieve our work. Please note that all donations \$2.00 and over a fully tax-deductible.

Online donations can be made at  
[aboriginalliteracyfoundation.org/EOFY26](http://aboriginalliteracyfoundation.org/EOFY26)  
or  
[givenow.com.au/aboriginalliteracyfoundation](http://givenow.com.au/aboriginalliteracyfoundation)

## Deposits and Cheques

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation Inc  
BSB: 013 516 | Account: 4960 01997

(If you are a previous donor, please use your full name as reference for receipting purposes. If you are donating for the first time, please email or call with your details to receive a receipt.)

Alternatively, you may call 03 9650 1006 to make donations over the phone.

Cheques can also be sent to the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation at PO Box 315 Flinders Lane VIC 8009

## 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 Inc.

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 send to

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