A Fresh New Year

It’s always refreshing to start the year anew. The end of 2013 crept up more quickly than ever, and the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation had a fantastic last quarter of 2014 with new partnerships developing between a number of generous sponsors and over 16,000 books going out to Indigenous children around Australia in 2013.

A New Title for our Newsletter

Thanks to Mr Maurice Sexton from the ACT we have a new name for our newsletter – ALFabet! Mr Sexton has been a loyal supporter of the ALF for many years and we are thrilled that he came up with such a clever name.

ALF Online

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation is currently working on getting a new website up and running to keep you informed about all of our activities and provide you with some great literacy resources. The new website is due to be launched in June this year.

If you haven’t yet joined us on Facebook we would love to see you there. Our online community has grown to include over 740 of you at the time of writing, and the conversation that has grown around Indigenous literacy is truly inspiring. Come join us! facebook.com/aboriginalliteracyfoundation

Go Green: Subscribe to Our E-Newsletter

We are conscious of our impact on the environment. To reduce paper waste we encourage you to subscribe to our e-newsletter to save precious resources. To subscribe to our e-newsletter and stop receiving this print version email info@aboriginalliteracyfoundation.org

Many thanks for your generous support. Without you we would not be able to do our very important work. Here’s to a fantastic 2014!

David Perrin, CEO

What’s Happening in Your State?

We will be featuring a different State or Territory in each issue of ALFabet to highlight your local programs, activities and sponsors.

Donate Your Age in Books

The ALF is launching an interactive campaign to encourage children (and adults) to engage with donating books to their peers in remote areas of Australia.
The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation is a registered non-profit organisation committed to giving Indigenous children the chance they deserve to learn to read and write. Since our inception in 2003 we have helped thousands of young Aboriginals through our range of literacy support programs.

We seek to transform the lives of Indigenous children by focusing on literacy and numeracy education. Working in collaboration with local communities and partners, we develop literacy skills with Indigenous children so that they can succeed in school and beyond. Our vision is for a future where all Aboriginals can pursue quality education, reach their full potential and contribute to their community and country in a meaningful way.

www.aboriginalliteracyfoundation.org

Four Young Literacy Learners – Their Story

The ALF is committed to our young students. These are four stories about children from different backgrounds who have grown up with the ALF. These stories illustrate how our work is positively affecting their lives and their chances at succeeding in their studies. Our mission is to engage, educate and mentor – and sometimes that comes in many different ways.

Shane– Shane is 12 years old and arrived in Ballarat from Glenelg in South Australia six months ago. Shane’s parents have moved a lot over the years, usually because of his father searching for work. Shane’s dad has recently found some permanent work in Beaufort (not too far from Ballarat). Due to the constant moving Shane’s education has suffered. He found school difficult and was mostly sitting at the back of the class to avoid the teacher’s eye. About 3 months ago, Shane’s teacher referred him to the ALF and an assessment was made of his literacy and numeracy skills. Various tests (including the ACER and Schonnell tests) revealed that he was well behind his peers, probably 3 to 4 years behind, having skills more appropriate to a student in year 2 or 3. However, one of the tests (ACER) was done on a computer, and during this test Shane showed the ability to quickly and efficiently operate a keyboard. He proudly told the tutor he played computer games at home. The ALF tutor then showed Shane a number of computer games that the foundation just bought from the USA, which Shane immediately loved! What he didn’t realise was that they were new literacy skills games based around spelling words and reading, but used a racing car game to engage the kids. Shane quickly became absorbed in these games and has been getting better and better. Unknowingly he was also getting better at his spelling and reading. About a month later the tutor tried some conventional learning programs and Shane responded well. Now several months later, Shane is at the point of being able to participate in class and is even saying that he quite likes going to school! Mind you he loves telling us that he is now by far the best and fastest at the racing car game at the ALF tutorials!
**Cyndy** - Cyndy lives with her mum on the outskirts of Skipton in an old rented house. She attended a local primary school, but found it very hard. Entrenched negative attitudes in the school caused many difficulties for the local indigenous families. Many of the aboriginal families preferred a smaller school a bit further out of town because of its more welcoming atmosphere, but unfortunately this very small school was closed down in the 1990’s. Because of these problems, Cyndy and few other kids started to receive visits from a teacher who drove from Ballarat three times a week and was funded under the ATAS scheme. Unfortunately this scheme was also closed down in 2006 by the Federal Government, and Cyndy’s education was again left waiting for help.

In 2007 the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation decided to call for volunteers to maintain as much of the ATAS program as possible, particularly for those children who had cultural difficulties with the state education system or who were living in remote areas, and in 2009 Cyndy joined this program. With a complicated family life, Cyndy’s education had suffered quite a bit, but with ALF’s help she progressed well enough to be able to attend Sebastopol Secondary College under an indigenous program. During her time at school, Cyndy received tutoring at home one afternoon a week, and attended a number of our Literacy & Heritage camps held around Ballarat. When Cyndy was in year 10 she heard of an opportunity to enter a Certificate II in hairdressing and beauty therapy at the Ballarat School of Mines. At the end of Year 10 she transferred over and by the end of the following year she had a hairdressing apprenticeship in Ballarat. Now Cyndy travels by bus each morning to work and is about to become a qualified hairdresser. Cyndy and her mum both say they couldn’t have done this without the ALF.

**Jake** - Jake is 11 and a half years of age and comes from Wentworth, about 30 kilometres north of Mildura. Wentworth is almost a ghost town with farming around the hamlet falling on bad times years ago. Jake’s family are one of few families that have stayed in town. With no employment and little money for travel, Jakes attendance at school has almost been non-existent. At 10 years old Jake and his family were visited by a nurse called Janine, who quickly realised that even at his age Jake had no literacy skills and no knowledge of the alphabet. Fortunately Janine was also the local Aboriginal Literacy Foundation tutor, and she soon started working with Jake, providing him with tutorial assistance three afternoons per week. She also gave him access to some literacy games and other software which she was able to bring on her laptop. Jake was delighted with the games having not had much contact with computers, and learned fast. Within a month he had grasped the alphabet and basic spelling using the phonic method. Two months later he seemed to have learned most of the 72 blended sounds, thanks to a user friendly computer game developed for low socio-economic status children in Chicago. By the end of the first year of tutoring (and also due to the help of Jake’s aunty) he was reading quite well and demonstrated a Schonell reading age of nine, not too far away from his own age. At that time a new centre for Koori Outdoor Education (KODE) was opening in Mildura, and Janine suggested that if he could get a lift in to town Jake might like to attend. KODE was developed for indigenous children who find traditional schooling impossibly constraining (particularly being indoors the whole time). Jake now attends at least three times a week and says he loves it!

**Joany** - Joany is 10 years old and lives with her mother, grandmother and uncle at Mt Doran on the edge of the Brisbane Ranges in Victoria. Joany’s mother used to attend the nearby primary school, but it closed during the economy drives in the 1990’s. It’s a 35 minute drive down the back roads to get to primary school in Bacchus Marsh and Joany’s mum says “We don’t have the money for petrol and sometimes the car isn’t going anyway”. About 18 months ago Joany was referred to the ALF by a local social worker, and weekly tutorials were started on Saturdays at Joany’s home. Tests revealed that Joany’s reading age was about 6 on the Schonell scale and her spelling was slightly better with the Peters Spelling test. A diagnostic test also revealed that she had a minimum understanding of blended sounds and found 2 syllable words very difficult to understand. Fortunately Joany’s grandmother could spell quite well and was willing to help with the tutoring. Worksheets were prepared to develop Joany’s areas of weakness, and each Saturday the ALF tutor would work with Joany and her Gran and gradually Joany’s reading started to improve. Nine months later Joany had improved to within a year of her chronological peers, and had started to say she might like to try school. A neighbouring family with children offered to drive her down each day, and Joany now says she loves school!
ALF Partnerships in Action:

The Discovery Book Club

One of the largest projects we support in WA is the **DISCOVERY BOOK CLUB (DBC)**.

The DBC is based in Fremantle and Perth. The purpose of this project is to establish a sustainable community partnership and resource model to support the development of positive reading relationships and literacy skills of children coming into care. The Discovery Book Club project comprises four main components based on core education service practices to support these children:

1. Book and literacy parcels are mailed to children every six months from the first two years since coming into care.
2. Student Teacher Support Readers who provide recreational readers support with a child in care, for at least one hour per week for two school terms.
3. Foster Care support sessions providing current research and information to foster carers on ways to support literacy development for children in care.
4. Education Service intake and referral model.

Most importantly it’s all about empowering children in care!

This very successful program has seen its work being expanded to the Wheat belt (Northam), Armadale (Gosnells), Karratha, Mandurah, and to some Residential Houses in Casuarina and Carnarvon. The Reading only programs have been expanded to Midland and Laverton in the Northern Goldfields.

The Discovery Book Club is greatly assisted by the University of Notre Dame with space, volunteer readers, and resources. The university also adds an extra value to the program as it provides testing and evaluation. This then feeds back into the on-going assessment of the program and its planning.

The ALF and DBC are proud to provide books and assistance to 540 children in Perth and Fremantle, but even prouder to state that with the expansion of this project to other cities and towns in Western Australia, it may well see another 500+ children and families receive assistance. In all this project will help thousands of families across Western Australia.

The ALF is very proud of its relationship with the Discovery Book Club, and see it as our major link to WA and its indigenous youth. By supplying WA with books and resources we are helping our young brothers and sisters to embrace reading, learning, and the value of education. This early assistance program is essential in promoting the life chances of so many young indigenous boys and girls.

(Source: http://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/ChildrenInCare/Pages/DiscoveryBookClub.aspx)
New Projects in 2014

Melbourne Learning Centre

For the last 25 years, the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation has been working with Indigenous children and their families in Victoria from its Ballarat Learning Centre. This centre has been an extraordinary success, helping educate and mentor many thousands of children over this time, many of which have gone on to university and employment. This centre is the model for our new Melbourne Learning Centre.

The Melbourne Learning Centre will address a real and growing need to assist the many indigenous children and their families in Melbourne. With nearly half of all indigenous Victorians living in the Melbourne area (ABS 2011), there is a pressing need to help these families meet the challenges of education and life. The new Melbourne Learning Centre will offer the following free services;

- One-on-one tutoring with trained volunteers and teachers
- A children’s library, homework clubs, IT & digital literacy support
- Free educational resources such as books and literacy backpacks
- A health and wellbeing centre which will be staffed by pro bono professionals with audiology, ophthalmology, speech pathology and nutrition backgrounds
- Literacy and Heritage camps

The centre will be established in Fitzroy or Collingwood later this year. In the meantime work will take place at our present location at Ross House in the CBD. We envisage this centre will be used by many hundreds of children and their families consistently throughout the year.

Digital Literacy Hub

This year the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation will be opening its new Digital Literacy Hub for student registrations. This new platform that will feature:

- **60 eBooks** – levels of reading from Aged 1-11; some will contain audio.
- **Literacy and numeracy games** – designed to extract engagement and proficiency in reading, and competency in spelling.
- **Educational resources** – easy to download forms and puzzles designed to engage and challenge students for literacy & numeracy progression
- **Testing and Evaluation** – A program will be designed to challenge and test students skills in spelling, maths and general knowledge.
- **A webinar format** – specifically for appointments between students and tutors and mentors. This engaging format will allow for more chat and study assistance in our aim to deliver more direct tutorials and mentoring to our students and their families.

This project has been sponsored by the ALF General Trust Fund and a range of philanthropic funds. Our major sponsors of the program include the Snow Foundation, auDA Foundation, Wellington Capital, and the Besen Family Foundation. We are also very excited to include our new partners, Wombat Stories and Billy’s Books in this new project. Both organisations have been very generous in donating not only books and educational resources but also valuable time in the development of this platform.
Sir Reginald Ansett’s Trust Supports ALF

Aviation pioneer, Sir Reginald Ansett, established a charitable trust in his Will to “assist children to take their place in life”. In 2012, the RM Ansett Trust awarded the ALF with a grant of $85,000 towards literacy tutoring programs in Regional Victoria.

The RM Ansett Trust, which is managed by Equity Trustees, distributes over $1 million each year through scholarships, signature grants to assist children in out-of-home care and project grants.

When asked about RM Ansett Trust’s support of the ALF, Equity Trustees’ Head of Philanthropy Tabitha Lovett told ALFabet “As trustee, we administer a grant program to identify and fund projects which will genuinely benefit children in need and ensure they receive the support they require to reach their potential. We appreciate the programs ALF undertakes to improve the literacy levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Strong reading and writing skills provide a foundation for further education and the program was a good match for the objectives of the RM Ansett Trust.”

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation is extremely grateful of the support we receive from the RM Ansett Trust and Equity Trustees.

Mazda Foundation

In 2011, The Mazda Foundation commenced its support of the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation, committing to a generous amount of funding over a three year period. Mazda’s support has enabled the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation to provide a Literacy Support Service for Indigenous children in Victoria aged 8-16 from 2011-2013.

The Literacy Support Service provided:

- Weekly literacy tutoring & Periodic literacy evaluation and testing
- Resources including books, games, CD’s etc. & Literacy & Heritage Camps
- Back Packs for each child containing workbooks and stationery & support and advice for parents and carers

Without the help of Mazda Foundation, the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation would not have been able to carry out this valuable program. We are extremely grateful to the Mazda Foundation for its generous contribution to our program.
Victorian Highlights

The Victorian Program

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation was established in 2003 in Ballarat, Victoria. It was founded by Dr Anthony Cree to formalise his continuing work with indigenous children and their families after being cut loose by large funding cuts to Indigenous education. His work over twenty five years has meant thousands of kids and their families have benefited from face to face tutorial assistance, testing and evaluation, literacy and heritage camps, cultural awareness, mentoring and confidence building programs.

The Victorian program is based around our Learning Centre in Ballarat. It involves not only work at the Ballarat centre but also involves staffed and volunteer tutored camps and programs around Victoria from the Western District to Gippsland. This program is presently under expansion to include a new program in the Moorabool Shire and more and more work being done in Melbourne itself. The inclusion of these new programs will see another 700 Victorian indigenous children come into regular contact with the ALF and its programs over the next year.

Two of newest additions to the Victorian program are the soon to be launched Melbourne Learning Centre and the new ALF Moorabool Program (incorporating a homework club and literacy & heritage camps).

ALF Staff and the Indigenous Group of Bacchus Marsh

Donate Your Age in Books Campaign

The ALF is launching an interactive campaign to encourage children (and adults) to engage with donating books to their peers in remote areas of Australia. Kids and Families will be able to track their donations to other kids, families and communities around Australia via email alerts.

Sign up to this Campaign NOW – email Hayley at hayleyfoster@aboriginalliteracyfoundation.org – and start your book drive now. At the moment this campaign is only open to our Melbourne supporters.
Highlights of the Last Six Months Work

October 2013

AFL legend Robert 'Dipper' DiPierdomenico donates 3000 of his Indigenous themed children’s books to the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation. These books have been added to our book distribution in the footy loving states of Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland.

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation was very proud to have contributed to a lovely children's book, "My Boomerang Dad". Written by Deanne Hislop and illustrated by Mike Nicholas for My Fifo Family. The book details life for a family that has a 'fly in fly out' father who is often away at work far away from the family home. This book is a wonderful and helpful tool for families dealing with the absence of a father due to work. The book is available to purchase online at http://www.myfifofamily.com/products-page/childrens-books/my-boomerang-dad/

ALF chairman Dr Anthony Cree OAM and Secretary Mr Norman Kennedy were delighted to receive a Commonwealth Bank Community Grant. These grants are given to programs that support children and youths up to 21 years old, and will help to fund our Digital Literacy Hub program across Australia.

This year has seen our book distribution program leap into action with a number of deliveries being made around Victoria, and to our friends in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. We have already distributed close to 11,000 books since October 2013.
Highlights continued:

ESH Employment Solutions are proud supporters of the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation and ran a book drive over several months resulting in a wonderful donation of children’s books to the ALF.

The ALF reaches 600 ‘likes’ on Facebook. Thanks to everyone for helping us achieve this milestone.

Hayley Foster from the ALF visits Mildura to distribute books, KOBO e-readers, and educational resources to a pre-schoolers educational expo at the Mildura Aboriginal Coop. ALF begins relationships with Mildura Coop and the Mildura Primary School.

November 2013

Volunteers from ExxonMobil spent a day at our “Melbourne Book Storage & Distribution Centre” helping to sort and pack books and literacy resources for Indigenous children as part of their Day of Caring. Hayley from the ALF office was busy helping the fantastic team on the day.

Medibank and ALF have the privilege to send some very excited kids to see the Wiggles!

Leila Gurruwiwi promotes Footy Nuts! ALF, Red Dust & Rotary join together with the Footy Nuts Program to promote Indigenous wellbeing

Cooper Grace Ward Lawyers of Brisbane hosted an annual presentation for 30 of our supporters. It was a great day in Brisbane! We always love to meet the people who make our work possible.

Caroline of Speech Pathology Australia and her adorable daughter Annalise personally dropped off some wonderful children’s books to the ALF. These books have all recently won the Speech Pathology Australia’s Book of the Year Awards. The ALF combines these books with our packages for WA. ALF declares its intention to work closer with Speech Pathology and other wellbeing groups with our new Melbourne Learning Centre.
December 2013

Annual Book Drive starts: Over 1000 books donated in November.

Families associated with Kids in Philanthropy (Melbourne) organize a book collection at Bialik College ELC for the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation - the children collected 955 books in 2 weeks. This amazing gift benefited a number of Aboriginal children in Victoria and in WA.

The ALF and Medibank treat 10 Indigenous children and their guardians to complimentary tickets to see The Wiggles and some Christmas lunch. Lots of fun was had by all!

ALF HQ had a box arrive from a little girl from New South Wales containing a huge variety of children’s books and a letter from her mother. For her 6th Birthday Party this month, she decided she would ask her guests to bring donations of brand new books in lieu of birthday presents.

ALF received a fantastic donation of hundreds of children’s book from the partners and employees of Norton Rose Fulbright (Melbourne office). The books were of excellent quality and will be sent out to some very deserving homes, schools, learning centres and be used in our tutoring and camps.

At the end of our Christmas Book Drive we saw over 3000 new and second hand books donated to the ALF.

Our Christmas Campaign resulted in not only books being donated, but also nearly $60,000 was gifted to the foundation over the November to January period from individual donors. A big thank you to you all - support like this helps make our job so much easier!
**JANUARY**

ALF organised a literacy and heritage camp in Ballarat catering for children and families from the outlying towns and villages.

Several box loads of The Healthy Living Series books are sent to Ampilatwatja in The Northern Territory.

Barbara and Greg from Gippsland deliver approximately 2000 books to the ALF warehouse. Thanks Barb & Greg Harding – great effort!

**FEBRUARY**

ALF is presented with a grant of $5000 from United Way & The Ballarat Foundation. This very generous gift was received with grateful thanks by our CEO, Mr David Perrin, in Ballarat at a special ceremony for grant winners. United Way/Ballarat Foundation is highlighting literacy this year in a special effort to promote books and reading amongst children. United Way/Ballarat Foundation has announced a new reading program for children based in the Ballarat district. On the night ALF signalled its willingness to contribute books and assistance to this new program.

ALF supports the Integrated family and Youth Services in Cairns with a delivery of Healthy Living Series.

**MARCH**

ALF starts its long awaited PATA program. The PATA program hopes to bring together parents and guardians of our students in an effort to improve their knowledge of literacy and numeracy, their knowledge of our work and where education is now, and to help them tutor and face the challenges that confront their growing children. The PATA program begins at our Ballarat Learning Centre at the end of the month.

The Victorian Tutoring Scheme is in full action. Based in Ballarat and sponsored by RM Ansett Trust, The Mazda Foundation, Equity Trustees, State Trustees, and several other funds – the scheme sees several hundred children a year receive face to face tutoring.
Highlights continued:

ALF begins the Melbourne Learning Centre Campaign. ALF aims to raise funds for the Melbourne Learning Centre.

ALF begins talks with the Cathy Freeman Foundation regarding how our ‘Books for Learning Program’ can assist the wonderful work they do in Palm Island in Queensland.

Jigsaw Magazine publishes an article on the Healthy Living Series books resulting in nearly 1000 copies being sent out to childcare centres across Australia.

ALF celebrates International Mother Language Day on social media drawing attention to the 145 indigenous languages that are still spoken in Australia. ALF signals its intention to promote local languages in its 2014 camps and mentoring.

ALF begins discussions with the Indigenous Group of Bacchus Marsh to initiate a homework club.

ALF begins discussions with Bialik College in Hawthorn, Mildura Primary School and Bacchus Marsh Primary School to begin a three way Urban-Country Exchange. This program aims to promote a deeper cultural understanding and real exchange with kids from an urban and country setting, and kids from different cultural backgrounds. This exciting program aims to launch in mid-2014.

In preparation for the Melbourne Learning Centre, ALF begins discussions with several health and wellbeing guilds to be involved with the new MLC Wellbeing Room.

ALF attends the Close the Gap day at Bacchus Marsh. ALF moves to work with the local community in opening up a Homework Club in Bacchus Marsh for up to 70 local indigenous kids.

WHAT A BRILLIANT SIX MONTHS ALREADY.... WE LOOK FORWARD TO AN AMAZING YEAR AHEAD!
The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation would like to thank and acknowledge the

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Individual private citizens that donate to us. Your support is enormously appreciated and highly valued. Thankyou so much for your continuing interest and support of our work!

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation is looking forward to sending you more and more news of our operations and events. We want you to be more interactive with us too. So please join us in celebrating our work by joining our newsletter list via Facebook and while you are there LIKE us. You can also follow us on Twitter. By doing so you can help us give indigenous kids around Australia a hand up in the quest to complete school and take on life’s challenges!
Thank You to all our major partners
Your support is enormously appreciated

Mazda Foundation
RM Ansett Trust
Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation
Gandel Philanthropy
auDA Foundation
Eric Ormond Baker Charitable Fund
Andrews Foundation
ANZ Staff Foundation
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The Ballarat Foundation & United Way Ballarat
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James N Kirby Foundation
The Stan Perron Charitable Trust
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The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation would like
to thank all our major partners