

Aboriginal Literacy Foundation project report

Project name: Delivery of backpacks to Kowanyama and Pormpuraaw

Funder/s: Rotary Club of West Footscray, R2A Ltd, Rotary District 9800

Project start date: 20/02/2013

Expected project completion date: 31/08/2013

Amount of grant: \$12,500

Project expenditure:

Freight and distribution:	\$4288.67
Backpacks:	\$2500
Books:	\$5176.95
Project management:	\$534.38
Total:	\$12500

The three funding organisations provided funding of \$12,500 for the provision of backpacks to children of the communities of Kowanyama and Pormpuraaw in Far North Queensland. This funding will cover backpacks filled with new books to all primary school children in both communities. The books included in the backpacks were a combination of “Indij Readers” products, “Enage Literacy” products and the ALF’s own product, the “Healthy Living” books series. The funding also allowed ALF branded for backpacks to be purchased, which the books are packed in. Enough backpacks were able to be purchased for all the children in the two communities, with enough left over to be provided to students in other communities.

How effectively is the project currently meeting its objectives?

The development and introduction of the Backpack project in the indigenous communities of Kowanyama and Pormpuraaw is going extremely smoothly and well. Backpacks for over 300 children in both communities have been packed and are ready for distribution once the new school term commences at the end of April, 2013. Contact with the schools has been made and they are extremely excited about their students receiving the packs.

We also had leftover funds to purchase further ALF-branded backpacks and to pay for freight and distribution of backpacks to other Indigenous communities. We plan for further backpacks to be distributed in May to children in Dareton, NSW and Ocean View, SA. The funding from Rotary West Footscray, R2ALtd and District 9800 will also support these planned distributions.

The books range in subject matter and reading level and will certainly meet our objective of re-engaging and encouraging children to read and become more involved in learning at home and at school. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the program by tutors and teachers working with the children will be provided in the months following the distribution of the packs. We are expecting improved attendance at school, greater interest in reading and improved reading and spelling levels. The school principals have said they expect the children will be greatly encouraged by the provision

of the books and personal literacy support. As well as increased engagement of the indigenous children, Backpack projects in other regions have resulted in younger siblings and parents also enjoying the resources at home, encouraging literacy from a young age and across generations. Children who are engaged in reading from a young age, will have much greater confidence and success at school. We truly believe that the impact of this program will be multigenerational, particularly as the resources will remain in these communities and be available for the longer term.

Support and engagement from funding organisations

The support and communication we received from Rotary Club of West Footscray was fantastic. John Francis was very helpful and quick to respond to any queries we had. On confirmation of the funding support, the three funding organisations nominated two specific communities that they wished to target. This led to some minor adjustments to our 2013 backpack delivery schedule. Additional funding that was not required for the two outlined communities was distributed towards other communities that will benefit from the Backpack Program. The funding organisations were understanding and helpful with both these adjustments.

It was also a pleasure to host John Francis at the Ballarat Literacy Camp on March 2. John was a very helpful contributor at the camp, and one grandmother made particular mention of the great help John was with her granddaughter. We hope that John and other Rotary members will continue to play an active role with ALF camps and other programs.

Future steps

The backpacks will be delivered to the Kowanyama and Pormpuraaw communities at the beginning of Term 2 in early May. Following the initial distribution to the children we will acquire comments from teachers and photos of the children, which will be forwarded on to Rotary West Footscray for distribution amongst all parties. In August of this year we will seek formal feedback from the schools outlining the overall impact of the project. These results will also be forwarded to Rotary West Footscray.

Leftover funds that didn't go directly to the two outline communities were used to purchase further ALF-branded backpacks and to pay for freight and distribution of backpacks to other Indigenous communities. These payments will allow for further backpacks to be distributed in May to children in Dareton, NSW and Ocean View, SA.

Please note: For your reference we have included a photo of the children receiving their new ALF backpacks in Nganambala, NT. These packs were distributed in a similar project in February 2013. We will send further photos from Kowanyama and Pormpuraaw as they come through.