

MEDIA RELEASE

22 September, 2026

ALNF AND RIO TINTO PARTNER TO STRENGTHEN FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES

The Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation (ALNF) and Rio Tinto have announced a new three-year partnership to support First Nations communities in preserving, revitalising and strengthening their Languages for future generations.

The partnership supports the objectives of the United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022 to 2032), assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Language communities to develop and lead locally driven language initiatives through ALNF's Living First Languages Platform. Together, communities will document, teach and share Language, strengthen local capability, and develop new digital resources that help keep Languages strong and accessible for generations to come.

Developed alongside First Nations communities, ALNF's Living First Languages Platform places language ownership firmly in community hands. Combining cultural knowledge with digital technology, the platform enables communities to capture, manage and teach their Languages in ways that reflect local priorities, cultural protocols and aspirations.

The partnership will support community-led Language initiatives in Mapoon (Queensland), Nhulunbuy/Yirrkala (Northern Territory), Bidjandanga (Western Australia), Bundjalung Country (New South Wales and Queensland), and Kalkatungu Country (Queensland).

Cultural Heritage Advisor for the Mapoon Language Project Jason Jia said the partnership represents an important investment in the future of Language and culture.

"The Mapoon Language Project is more than a program, it is a living commitment to keeping language, culture, and identity strong for future generations. Through working alongside Elders and community, we are not just recording words, but strengthening connections to Country and ensuring our stories, knowledge, and voices continue to thrive for years to come.

"This work is essential, and ongoing funding ensures that this cultural knowledge is not lost but carried forward with pride and purpose."

Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation Chief Executive Anne Hollonds AO said: "We greatly appreciate the opportunity to work alongside communities dedicated to seeing teaching and learning flourish in their Languages. Being able to read, write, speak, listen and understand in one's own Language has a powerful lifelong impact on education, employment, identity, wellbeing, social connection and belonging. Communities are leading this work, and we are honoured to support them and be trusted by them."

Rio Tinto Iron Ore Chief Executive and Australia Country Head Matthew Holcz said: "This partnership will provide Indigenous communities with a range of resources to retain control and ownership of their Languages.

"For tens of thousands of years, Indigenous communities have cared for Country, and by honouring their languages, we can help strengthen and protect this deep cultural history.

Over the next three years, the partnership will support community-led Language initiatives across Australia through training, mentoring, community governance, technology, digital language resources, interactive learning tools and opportunities for Language groups to connect and learn from one another. It will also strengthen the Living First Languages Platform, ensuring communities continue to have access to practical tools that place Language ownership and knowledge in their own hands.

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ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN LITERACY & NUMERACY FOUNDATION

The Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation (ALNF) is a national charity dedicated to raising language, literacy and communication outcomes across Australia.

For more than 25 years, ALNF has worked alongside communities to deliver specialised, evidence-based programs that create lasting opportunities for children, young people and families. Our work spans diverse communities across Australia, with a strong focus on First Nations communities, refugee and newly arrived communities, and those experiencing barriers to literacy and education.

At ALNF, we believe literacy is freedom. Strong language and literacy skills open pathways to education, connection and opportunity, enabling people to participate fully in society, express themselves and have their voices heard.

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