

MEDIA RELEASE

12 OCTOBER, 2026

FIRST LANGUAGE COMMUNITIES COME TOGETHER IN DARWIN FOR INAUGURAL NATIONAL GATHERING

First Language speakers and community representatives from across Australia will come together in Darwin this week for The Gathering, the first national gathering of the Australian Literacy & Numeracy Foundation's (ALNF) Living First Language network.

Held from 13 to 15 October, The Gathering will bring together representatives from Language communities involved in projects across the country, creating a rare opportunity to meet face-to-face, build relationships, share knowledge and learn from one another.

Over three days, community representatives will lead and participate in presentations, workshops, discussions and practical sessions exploring Language revitalisation, teaching and learning, and the different ways communities are using digital technology to support their Language work.

While each community's Language, priorities and approach are unique, The Gathering creates a space for people doing this work to exchange ideas and experiences, share what they have learned and celebrate the strength of First Languages.

ALNF CEO Anne Hollonds AO said it was a privilege for ALNF to bring the network together for the first time.

'There is an extraordinary depth of knowledge, experience and commitment within these communities. This is a critical opportunity to share knowledge and strengthen relationships to support this important work in 12 different communities across Australia.

'Language is a core part of our culture and identity. When children and adults across generations are able to communicate and connect in their First Language, it helps to build a strong identity and sense of belonging. This is especially important for wellbeing, development and learning for children and young people.

'The Languages, the knowledge and the vision for their future belong to communities. We are proud to play a role in supporting this work and creating opportunities for these connections to grow.'

The Gathering forms part of ALNF's Living First Language Program, which supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the revitalisation, maintenance, teaching and intergenerational sharing of their First Languages.

A key tool within the program is the Living First Language Platform, which enables communities to capture, curate and manage Language content and develop digital resources to support teaching and learning. The technology sits within a broader, community-led approach that includes training, capability building and ongoing support.

The Gathering also takes place during the United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032), a global initiative recognising the importance of Indigenous Languages and the urgent need to support their preservation, revitalisation and promotion.

The Gathering is an opportunity to strengthen the relationships that underpin the Living First Languages network and, importantly, to create space for communities to learn directly from one another.

As participants return home, the knowledge, ideas and connections shared in Darwin will travel with them, supporting the ongoing Language work taking place in communities across Australia.

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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 for children, young people and families, with a strong focus on First Nations communities, refugee and newly arrived communities, and those experiencing barriers to literacy and education.

ALNF's Living First Languages Program supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to revitalise, maintain, teach and share their First Languages, combining community-led Language work with training, capability building and digital tools.

At ALNF, we believe literacy is freedom. Strong language and literacy skills open pathways to education, connection and opportunity.

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