



The Hon Brendan O'Connor MP Minister for Skills and Training

MEDIA RELEASE

Better access to literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills crucial for Indigenous Australians

The Albanese Government is working to close the gap, by removing barriers to accessing education and training for First Nations Australians.

Minister for Skills and Training Brendan O'Connor will announce in Darwin today a specific Indigenous stream to the Government's Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) foundation skills program, to improve literacy, numeracy and digital skills for First Nations Australians.

Around 1 in 5 Australian adults lack the basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills to gain better jobs and participate fully in society.

For First Nations people, it is estimated that 40 per cent of adults have minimal

English literacy and this figure can rise as high as 70 per cent in remote communities, such as those in the NT.

The Government is investing \$436 million over four years to fundamentally reform the way the Commonwealth delivers Foundation Skills programs, so Australians have the core literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills to succeed.

The redesign of the SEE program will provide more pathways for Australians to access training to improve their language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills. It is expected to support up to 2,000 First Nations people per year by 2026-27.

From 1 July 2024, stream one of foundation skills will focus on job seekers, employees and people not in formal education, employment or training.

A new second stream will focus on First Nations people, providing grants to First Nations community-controlled organisations so they can partner directly with training providers.

It will be delivered through First Nations organisations in partnership with TAFEs and other Registered Training Organisations or Adult and Community Education sector providers.

The second stream comes following consultation with Indigenous representatives through the Foundation Skills Advisory Group, and is an example of the Albanese Government delivering policy working with First Nations Australians.

While the redesign work takes place, the Government will extend the Foundation Skills for Your Future: Remote Community Pilots program for a

further 12 months to 30 June 2024. The extension will ensure this important work continues for the Tennant Creek community, one of 11 remote communities where this pilot is taking place.

Minister for Skills and Training Brendan O'Connor visited Charles Darwin University (CDU) in Darwin today to celebrate NAIDOC Week and see the impact making education and training more accessible and equitable is having on communities across the Northern Territory.

CDU is a leading provider of vocational education and training in the Northern Territory, including the Foundation Skills for Your Future program and the Fee-Free TAFE program, which is helping tackle our current skills shortage.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Skills and Training Brendan O'Connor

"The Albanese Government is working to close the gap, by removing barriers to accessing life-changing education and training for First Nations Australians.

"Far too many adult Australians face significant challenges with reading, writing, numeracy and digital skills – and this disproportionately affects First Nations Australians.

"The system has failed these people and for the sake of equity, inclusion and economic growth we need to act.

"We are determined to support these Australians by making access to foundation skills training easier and more fit-for-purpose.

"We have consulted widely and listened to feedback. We recognise a one-size fits all approach is simply not effective which is why we have redesigned the

delivery of foundation skills training to reflect what works best for local Indigenous communities.

“We are approaching a Voice to Parliament in the same way because if we want to improve the lives of Indigenous Australians, we must listen to Indigenous people about matters which directly affect them.”

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