



Established 1959

Yes, I Can!

Aboriginal Adult Literacy Campaign

The '*Yes, I Can!* Aboriginal adult literacy campaign', overseen by the Literacy for Life Foundation (www.lfff.org.au), was launched in Wilcannia in February 2012. The campaign uses a model developed in Cuba, which sets out to achieve population-level change in adult literacy levels. Since 2012, the campaign has spread to other western NSW communities - Bourke, Enngonia, Brewarrina, Weilmoringle and most recently Walgett. The Literacy for Life Foundation is a national Aboriginal organisation, led by Aboriginal educator and development worker Jack Beetson. It works in partnership with local Aboriginal land councils, health services and community working parties and is backed by major corporate sponsor, Multiplex, and receives additional support from government and private donors. Campaigns are independently evaluated by a team from the University of New England, led by Associate Professor Bob Boughton.

To date, the campaign has made contact with over 450 Aboriginal adults through its household surveys, and enrolled 176 in the campaign classes. Of these, 118 have successfully completed. The retention rate of 67% is over five times the retention for VET system courses at a similar level. The campaign works because it employs and trains local Aboriginal staff, embedding a culture of learning in the community. Local schools are reporting a significant impact on children's performance and also parent and grandparent's engagement in schooling, while community leaders and campaign students report a range of other benefits, including improvements in health, well-being and community safety. On the basis of this success, the Foundation is now seeking funding to roll the campaign out nationally.

The '*Yes, I Can!* Aboriginal adult literacy campaign' is a most outstanding recipient of the Inaugural Cynthia Briggs Empowerment through Education Award.