

ACER Foundation

LATEST NEWS

LITTLE J & BIG CUZ LAUNCHED

On 28 April the ACER Foundation's major project, *Little J & Big Cuz*, will premiere on NITV.

The Commonwealth Minister for Education and Training, Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham, joined ACER CEO Geoff Masters and representatives from NITV and SBS in launching *Little J & Big Cuz* at a premiere screening at Parliament House, Canberra.

Other parliamentarians including Shadow Minister for Education, Tanya Plibersek MP, were in attendance, along with representatives from our project partners.

Children from a local preschool, primary school and the Parliamentary Creche attended the event and were presented with show bags. Indigenous actor Mark Coles-Smith, who voices Uncle Mick, entertained the children, in costume during the formalities, before the screening of one episode. The children audibly expressed their engagement with the action on screen!

Minister Birmingham, who viewed the educational games and the story book app which will be available on the *Little J & Big Cuz* website, said, 'Hopefully in years to come, *Little J & Big Cuz* will be as iconic as B1 and B2.' A copy of Minister Birmingham's speech is available online.



We are excited that the series, and the innovative web-based resources that support it, have become a reality. It is also very pleasing to see the enthusiasm with which the series is being embraced by representatives from Indigenous communities. At this point the series is being translated into six Indigenous languages accompanied by English sub-titles.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN LESOTHO

Providing school buildings

ACER is supporting a small community based school in Makhalong village near Maseru. This school does not have access to traditional funding from church or government and we are providing funds for the construction of three classrooms in one new rectangular space at Mollele Primary School.

A number of pallets of educational resources have also been sent to the school; however, due to the state of the buildings these have been locked carefully into cupboards to avoid water damage in the leaking classrooms.

Sponsoring vulnerable students

A group of vulnerable students can now complete their secondary school education due to the generosity of ACER staff who are sponsoring them.

The grateful students have written letters of thanks for the opportunity to be able to continue on at school. Many are now aiming to undertake university studies in the future in courses that include medicine, engineering and economics. Some staff are also continuing to sponsor their student during their tertiary studies.

Providing water

ACER has also agreed to fund the provision of a water supply as some students have been arriving late to school because of the need to travel up to five kilometres from home in order to collect water in the mornings.



Lesotho is a fourth world country
Classrooms are not heated
There are no reading books
Classes can have up to 198 students



Existing school buildings in Lesotho

We are pleased to be able to make a difference to the students of Makhalong village.

EVALUATION OF THE KIMBERLEY EDUCATION EXCELLENCE PROGRAM



ACER is assisting with the evaluation of the Wunan Foundation's Kimberley Education Excellence Program (KEEP) program, which has operated in NSW since 2011 and was extended to Victoria in 2016. The program aims to provide a stable home environment for students from the East Kimberley while completing their secondary education.

During an inspiring ceremony attended by his proud family and Wunan staff, Justin Mosquito from Halls Creek became the first student to graduate Year 12.

As well as completing Year 12, Justin also won the Outstanding Trade Student (Automotive) and the Hibberd Award for the student who has shown the greatest resilience and spirit in the face of significant challenge.

According to Wunan CEO Christian Zahra, when Justin entered KEEP in Year 7, like many Indigenous students in the East Kimberley, he had extremely low levels of literacy and numeracy. 'Justin's reading was assessed at Year 1 level and he was unable to tell the time or comprehend basic mathematics,' Mr Zahra said. 'Given how far behind he was when he began in the program, Justin's successful completion of Year 12 represents a heroic effort on his part and is a very satisfying result for all of those dedicated people who have supported him in his journey.'

SKYLINE EDUCATION FOUNDATION

ACER supports the Skyline Foundation by providing access to online assessments which are used as part of their selection process. In 2016 they again had very positive results confirming that this approach of intensive support for high performing but disadvantaged students is very worthwhile.



WHAT'S OUR NEXT BIG IDEA?

Following the launch of *Little J & Big Cuz* we are keen to consider ideas for a new major educational need that the Foundation could address and champion. We are looking for another ambitious project that addresses a significant need and that might attract support from other parties with commitment to that area.

Our Mission is to address educational disadvantage in the community and as a Foundation for Educational Research the proposed idea will involve associated research based activity.

If you have a specific idea in this regard please send it to:
deirdre.jackson@acer.edu.au



In 2016 more than 3500 students entered the Australian STEM Video Game Challenge which engages Australian students with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) while designing and building an original video game.

Students are challenged to use STEM-related skills in a creative environment, engaging and empowering them to learn by constructing a fun, interactive, stimulating and meaningful game using creativity and innovation.

Why STEM?

75%

of the fastest growing occupations require stem-related skills and capabilities¹

30%

of Australian students score below the levels of minimal competency in mathematics and science²

- INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING, CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING**
 ...have been identified as key attributes in countries that are strong in stem and stem-related disciplines
- BY CHANNELLING AND DEVELOPING STEM SKILLS THROUGH AN INTRINSICALLY FUN MEDIUM WE**
 ... restimulate commitment to stem-related disciplines amongst Australian students

IN 2017 THE AUSTRALIAN STEM VIDEO GAME CHALLENGE IS LOOKING FOR GAMES THAT EXPLORE OR ADDRESS THE THEME OF **'REACTION!'**