



**Literacy
Matters**

State Library of Western Australia
Literacy Strategy

2017 - 2027



State Library
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Acknowledgement

In all of the ways the State Library of Western Australia showcases the stories of Western Australia, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture is acknowledged as the oldest living continuous culture. The State Library respects the traditional custodians of that culture past, present and future. The State Library's vision is to be one of the world's great libraries. To do this we will build, preserve and showcase physical and digital collections that reflect our rich Western Australian heritage and the many facets of our history.



State Library
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Perth Cultural Centre

25 Francis Street
Perth WA 6000

T: (08) 9427 3111

E: info@www.slwa.wa.gov.au

W: www.slwa.wa.gov.au



Literacy Matters

Introduction

The ability to read and write underpins everything we do, every day. A literate community is strong and inclusive, where individuals and families are resilient, aspirational, socially engaged, informed, healthy and connected.

The State Library of Western Australia is committed to supporting and enhancing literacy attainment for all Western Australians.

Literacy Matters: State Library of Western Australia Literacy Strategy 2017 - 2027 has been developed in response to past consultation and reported findings from Edith Cowan Institute for Education Research. The State Library is taking a leadership role to deliver a literacy strategy that champions the role of libraries in partnership with the range of State-wide, cross-sector organisations involved in the provision of literacy programs and services.



17%

of five year old children are developmentally vulnerable or at risk in their language and cognitive skills.



Our vision for literacy in Western Australia

All Western Australians have the literacy they need for living and learning

Strong skills in literacy have a significant impact on a broad range of life outcomes. They are the essential tools which people use to pursue and achieve their professional, educational and economic goals, as well as to further their personal and social development. Children with good literacy skills do better than their less literate peers across all their school subjects. Literacy enables ongoing, lifelong learning, through which people can achieve their full potential, feel valued for their contribution to their communities, and be active and informed citizens. Having a highly literate population is necessary to Australia's productivity, its ability to cope with increasingly complex challenges and demands, and improves the quality of life of its citizens.

Research from the Australian Productivity Commission outlines the links between literacy skills and employment, health, social and community participation, and states that higher levels of literacy are associated with greater earning potential, better health outcomes, increased community participation and personal wellbeing.¹

Australia has a higher than average number of people with excellent levels of literacy proficiency. However, there remain significant proportions of the Australian adult population whose literacy skills are poor. 12.6% of Australian adults struggle to paraphrase or form low level inferences and a further 31% cannot interpret lengthy or dense texts.² This affects their ability to successfully read and navigate and complete a range of texts they could expect to interact with daily, such as complex forms, newspapers, contracts and multi-step instructions.

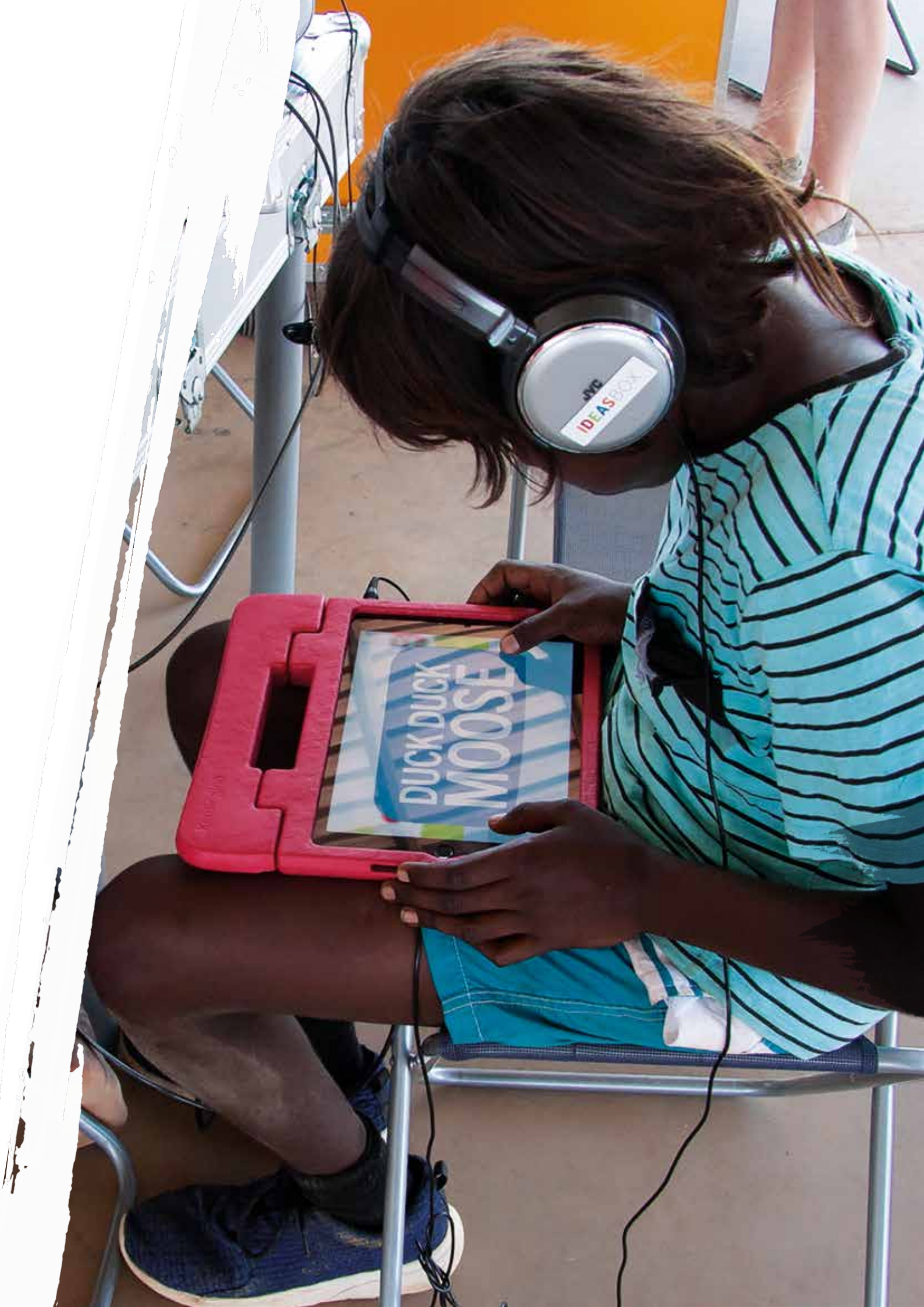
Literacy development begins at birth. The pre-school years are crucial to setting children on the right path towards strong literacy outcomes. In Western Australia 17% of five year old children starting school are developmentally vulnerable or at risk in their language and cognitive skills.³ Literacy and language development in children is improved when parents have the ability and confidence to share books with their children, foster a love of reading and prepare them effectively for the challenges of school.

Literacy Matters provides a 10 year strategy to coordinate the work of the State Library of Western Australia with its partners and supporters to improve literacy for all Western Australians.

¹ Shamos, A and Forbes, M (2014). *Literacy and numeracy skills and labour market outcomes in Australia*. Productivity Commission Staff Working paper, Canberra

² Survey of Adult Skills (PIACC), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2013. www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/

³ Australian Early Development Census 2015



Literacy today

The way we define literacy has evolved, with the requirements for functional literacy today being more complex and sophisticated than the traditional reading and writing literacies. Higher levels of functional literacy are needed for people to develop literacies such as financial, digital, visual, STEAM³ and cultural literacies.

In developing **Literacy Matters** the State Library has adopted the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) definition of literacy: **“the ability to understand, evaluate, use and engage with written text to participate in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.”**⁴

This definition is broadened to include the problem-solving skills required to succeed throughout life in the technology-rich environments of the 21st century. Adults and children are expected to be skilled in using technology to access and evaluate information, communicate on different digital platforms and deal with changing cultural influences. Constant change in the workplace requires education to continue beyond formal schooling.

Literacy Matters endeavours to adopt a culturally responsive teaching⁵ model when considering the linguistic, cultural and social contexts of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D).⁶ By understanding the ‘lived experiences’⁷ and needs of EAL/D speakers in a culturally responsive manner we hope to encourage literacy in each unique linguistic, cultural and social context in Western Australia. The scope of the Strategy applies to whole of life, encompassing multiple literacies including digital literacy, family and adult literacy.

Adults and children are expected to be skilled in using technology to access and evaluate information.

³ Science Technology Engineering Arts Mathematics

⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2016). *The survey of adult skills: readers companion*, Second edition. OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris.

⁵ Gay, Geneva, 2010, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research and Practice Second edition*. Teacher College, Columbia University New York and London. Culturally responsive teaching can be defined as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning outcomes more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of the students. pg 31

⁶ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/studentdiversity/who-are-eal-d-students

⁷ Geneva 2010 p182



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Photo: Jess Wyld

Libraries as leaders

Libraries have consistently been early adopters of technology and are long term providers of informal and non-formal learning opportunities to their communities. Libraries are accessible across the State, and are welcoming and inclusive. Programs and services include reader development, language and English conversation groups, digital literacy classes, reading clubs and workshops on a wide range of life skills. This places libraries in an ideal position to work with literacy providers to support learners of all ages and to champion the value of literacy to the Western Australian community.

Libraries are one of many organisations working in the literacy and language arena, alongside other government departments, not-for-profit organisations and community groups that provide literacy and numeracy programs. Research indicates that strategic partnerships and community-led approaches are generally effective in improving literacy outcomes for individuals and families.

The State Library will lead a strategy which builds upon the wealth of library experience across the State in collaboration with community, not for profit and government partners.

The State Library's Strategic Directions 2013-2017 includes two key objectives:

- **champion literacy and learning**
- **lead the development of the Western Australia public library network**

Literacy Matters supports these objectives by building on the unique role and contribution made by libraries in enhancing literacy and reading throughout Western Australia.

This places libraries in an ideal position to work with literacy providers to support learners of all ages and to champion the value of literacy to the Western Australian community.



Guiding principles

The following principles guide the goals and strategies of **Literacy Matters** to ensure it is relevant and meets the needs of all Western Australians. These principles have been shaped by consultations with key organisations including libraries, academic institutions, businesses, peak bodies, not-for-profit and government organisations.

- **Inclusive:** Remove barriers to literacy access to ensure equitable participation through creative, flexible and inclusive programs and services, delivered onsite and online.
- **Community-led:** A learner-focused approach which will include acknowledging that the culture, traditions and interests of individuals, families and communities are central to learning.
- **Collaborative:** Develop and coordinate partnerships to achieve the best outcomes for individuals and families with a learner-focused approach.
- **Sustainable:** Successful solutions and practices will be benchmarked, measured and ongoing.

Development in children is improved when parents have the ability and confidence to share books with their children.

Goals and strategies

Literacy Matters aims to:

- Set a long term direction for literacy improvement.
- Coordinate collaboration between the State Library, public libraries and our partners and supporters in whole of life literacy development for all Western Australians.

Our goals:

All Western Australians

1. Are **aware** of the value of literacy in opening up lifelong potential.
2. Have the **opportunity** to improve their literacy.
3. Have **access** to literacy learning programs.

To set a long term direction for literacy improvement we will:

Goal

All Western Australians are aware of the value of literacy in opening up lifelong potential

Strategy

- Provide opportunities for individuals and families to celebrate literacy, learning and the joy of reading.
 - Remove the stigma associated with difficulties reading, writing and numeracy.
 - Foster positive attitudes to encourage individuals to seek support.
 - Promote the role of libraries across the State in developing and enhancing literacy for life.
-

Goal

All Western Australians have the opportunity to improve their literacy

Strategy

- Create an alliance of key organisations and community leaders across sectors that can collaborate to improve literacy.
 - Develop and implement a Five Year Action Plan with meaningful indicators that measure improvements in literacy outcomes.
 - Collaborate with community, volunteer, government and non-government organisations to support local community-led literacy initiatives.
 - Work with EAL/D speakers and communities to provide meaningful and engaging literacy services for all ages.
 - Improve the confidence of parents to assist in the development of early literacy skills for their children.
 - Continually review programs using evidence based research with community input.
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Goal

All Western Australians have access to literacy learning programs

Strategy

- Promote and support services so people know where to get help with reading, writing and numeracy.
- Provide adult and family literacy initiatives that respond to a range of community needs.
- Support formal and informal literacy programs in community and workplace settings, providing different pathways for people to achieve their literacy goals.



THE 100 MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS
ABOUT YOUR BABY'S DEVELOPMENT
AND HOW TO ANSWER THEM TOGETHER

BABY WAYS



Evaluation framework

Measuring and reporting small improvements in literacy can be difficult. While it is known that improving literacy levels will improve the social, health and well-being outcomes for all, these changes can be difficult to measure. There are several existing measures available that can provide a baseline for future data collection and measurement.

- PIAAC: Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies Survey (OECD/ABS)
- Australian Early Development Census
- PISA: Program for International Student Assessment (OECD)

In consultation with key stakeholders, **Literacy Matters** will include the development of an evaluation framework to gather qualitative and quantitative data to measure improvements in literacy outcomes for Western Australians.

The table below gives an indication of some potential deliverables and targets that could be used in the measurement of the goals of **Literacy Matters**. The State Library and public libraries will continue to report on activities through data collected in annual statistical reporting processes.

Goal

All Western Australians are aware of the value of literacy in opening up lifelong potential

Deliverables and Targets

- State-wide literacy promotion/campaign held in partnership with local libraries and community organisations.
- Collaborative literacy forum held.
- Collateral developed to inform providers and the community of literacy support, initiatives and resources available in the State.

Goal

All Western Australians have the opportunity to improve their literacy

Deliverables and Targets

- 2017 - 2022 Action Plan developed and implemented.
- Evaluation framework developed.
- Increase in percentage of working age WA adults with literacy skills at or above level 3 (based on PIAAC/OECD 2022 results).
- Decrease in the percentage of WA children starting school who are developmentally vulnerable or at risk in the language & cognitive domain (based on Australian Early Development Census 2018 and 2021 results).
- An alliance of a diverse range of service providers is initiated.

Goal

All Western Australians have access to literacy learning programs.

Deliverables and Targets

- Number of partnerships established with service providers to deliver collaborative literacy initiatives.
- Number of professional development and engagement opportunities provided.
- Number of literacy initiatives.
- Number of individuals and families accessing literacy and learning programs.
- Number of literacy services reaching EAL/D communities.



Photo: Jess Wyld

Definitions

Adult literacy: people aged 15 and over have the ability to understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts to participate in society, to achieve their goals, and to develop their knowledge and potential.

(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)

Early literacy: incorporates a range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, listening, viewing, reading and writing.

(Belonging, being, becoming: the early year's learning framework for Australia)

Family literacy: intergenerational learning encompassing all foundation skills, using an integrated approach for adults and children to learn together to improve their literacy, language and numeracy.

Digital literacy: the ability to use digital technology, communication tools and networks to acquire and evaluate information, communicate with others and perform practical tasks.

(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)

EAL/D (English as an Additional Language or Dialect): an educational acronym that refers to those students whose home language is a language dialect other than Standard Australian English (SAE) and who require additional support to develop proficiency in Standard Australian English (SAE), which is the variety of spoken and written English used formally in Australian schools.

(Australian Curriculum. www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/studentdiversity/who-are-eal-d-students)



Supporting documents

Literacy Matters Strategy aims to align with policies, frameworks and curriculums at both national and state level supporting Council of Australian Government (COAG) objectives, Western Australian Government priorities for lifelong literacy and learning, and the work of community based literacy organisations. These include:

Survey of Adult Skills (PIACC). Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2013.
www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/

National foundation skills strategy for adults. Standing Council on Tertiary Education Skills an Employment. Canberra, SCOTese, 2012.

Australian core skills framework: 5 core skills, 5 levels of performance, 3 domains of communication. Adult Literacy Policy Section, Dept. of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, Canberra, A.C.T, 2012.

Belonging, being and becoming: the early years learning framework for Australia. Dept of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009.

Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2012. www.oecd.org/pisa

Indigenous Advancement Strategy www.indigenous.gov.au/indigenous-advancement-strategy

Australian Curriculum. Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.
www.australiancurriculum.edu.au



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