

FNU receives Literacy and Numeracy Resources



The Australian Government, through the Fiji Program Support Facility, handed over vital teaching resources to the Fiji National University (FNU) to support the teaching of literacy and numeracy in primary schools on Wednesday.

Speaking at the handing over ceremony at FNU's Natabua Campus, Lautoka, Chief Guest, Minister of Education, Heritage and Arts, Honourable Rosy Akbar said the government's five and 20-year National Development Plan set a target to improve literacy and numeracy in primary schools.

"These kits will assist FNU in ensuring that we promote literacy and numeracy in primary, secondary and indeed, tertiary education. This handing over ensures that you, the new graduates, will emerge equipped with the new strategy and latest teaching pedagogies to engage children in the wonders of learning," said Ministry Akbar.

The Honourable Akbar said the ministry is working to allow graduates to use technology and e-learning more fully to appeal to the younger generation and elicit improved results across the board.

FNU Vice-Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey thanked the Australian Governments support through the Fiji Program Support Facility which strengthens the efficiency, coherence and effectiveness of the aid program by focusing support on the key areas that make a difference in Fiji's economic development.

Professor Healey said that in today's post-industrial, interconnected world, literacy and numeracy are critical to young people having fulfilling careers and supporting the country's continued economic development.

"For Fiji to be successful in a globalised world, where we can increasingly compete for business in the so-called weightless or virtual economy now that the country has such advanced digital infrastructure, our young people need to be able to listen, speak, read and write excellent English," said Professor Healey.

"We know that that it is challenging to ensure that children develop English literacy skills, especially in remote rural communities where everyone is speaking a different first language, and older people may not, themselves, speak much English. This is why we need to focus on teaching English literacy in primary schools, to lay good foundations early."

"Similarly, in the era of so-called "Industry 4.0," dominated by the rise of artificial intelligence, big data and robotics, the future belongs to those with the mathematical skills to master the new technologies and exploit the incredible opportunities they offer. There is an old expression in science: "Biology is just applied chemistry, chemistry is just applied physics, and physics is just applied mathematics." Mathematics is at the heart of understanding science and technology."

"This is why it is so important to teach numeracy well in primary school, so that young children learn the mathematical language that will unlock the mysteries of science in their later years," added Prof Healey.

VC Healey said through this initiative, primary school students will make learning and teaching fun and exciting.

"The Fiji Government has made literacy and numeracy their top priorities for the education sector and, as the national university and the leading provider of initial teaching training, FNU must respond to this initiative by modernising the way that our Bachelor of Educations students are prepared as schoolteachers," said VC Healey.

"The teaching of literacy and numeracy in primary schools is critical to the country's future, and we are confident that these specialist teaching materials will significantly assist the Minister of Education in its drive to raise educational standards," he added.

The Australian High Commissioner to Fiji, John Feakes, said FNU as the largest teacher training institute in Fiji, hold a special and privileged role in Fiji's future in producing the nations future teachers.

"FNU is a valued partner of Australia and our Aid program. Both our Prime Minister and our Foreign Minister has visited FNU this year demonstrating the importance of education and skills training to both our Governments," said High Commissioner Feakes.

"These kits are to support literacy and numeracy training provided to teachers on the strategies for Years 1-4, aimed at improving student learning outcomes," he said.

The event was attended by invited guests and staff and students from FNU's Natabua Campus, Lautoka.