

National Year of Reading

The National Year of Reading has been phenomenally successful in generating political goodwill for libraries across Australia.

The idea for the campaign originally came from the ALIA Public Libraries Summit in 2009. Library leaders were seeking a way of demonstrating that, while public libraries were funded by state/territory and local government, they were part of an informal national network. A National Year of Reading was seen to be an ideal vehicle for showcasing this previously unacknowledged aspect of libraries.

The success of the initiative can be seen in the fact that, at the launch on 14 February 2012, the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, Arts Minister, Simon Crean, and School Education Minister, Peter Garrett all spoke to an audience of 200, which included several other federal MPs and Senators. At the legacy event on 12 November, which again takes place at the National Library, Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC CVO, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, will be guest of honour.

As it has rolled out across the country, the National Year of Reading has involved not only public libraries, but also state, territory, school, TAFE, University, and special libraries. Government contacts have praised the collaborative nature of the campaign and the fact that it brings together authors, illustrators, publishers, booksellers, and libraries.

A big bonus has been the amount of media coverage that the campaign has generated. By the end of the year, the National Year of Reading expects to have \$26m worth of TV, radio, print, and online media coverage promoting books, reading, and the importance of literacy at every stage of life. Again, this is highly attractive to politicians.

The campaign has exceeded all expectations in terms of local take up and national awareness and the 15 founder partners, including ALIA, the state and territory libraries, and all the state-based public library associations, are keen to maximise what has been achieved.

The plan is to continue the Love2read branding into 2013, with the reading flower being used to identify places where readers will find people who share their love of books; something to read;

someone to offer advice about reading; and a space (physical or online) in which to read.

More news of these future plans will emerge after the legacy event on 12 November. In the meantime, if you would like to find out more about the National Year of Reading, visit the website www.love2read.org.au.



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