

WRONG BOOK, RIGHT LIBRARY



1. Surf Coast Shire Cr Margot Smith has her audience spellbound at Torquay Library.



2. City of Greater Geelong Mayor, Cr Keith Fagg at Belmont Library wears his Nicholas Ickle top hat with style.

Geelong Regional Library Corporation is one of the major public library services in Victoria. With 16 branches and two mobile libraries we serve over a quarter of a million people living in the communities of our four member councils – Borough of Queenscliff, City of Greater Geelong, Golden Plains Shire, and Surf Coast Shire.

On Wednesday 22 May at 11 am, we were delighted to have special guest readers at 13 of our libraries to read Nick Bland's *The Wrong Book!* Our special guests included many of our Councillors, the Mayor of the Greater City of Geelong, Cr Keith Fagg and his wife, Cr Helene Cameron, Mayor of the Borough of Queenscliff, the Deputy Principle of Highton High School, Ms Carly Stafford, and Snr Sgt Angelo Ferrara from the Bellarine Police.

For some of our libraries, National Simultaneous Storytime (NSS) coincided with our regularly scheduled storytime sessions, for others it became an extra, special (or extra-special) event. Local primary schools and kindergartens were invited to attend and many took up the invitation. Across all our sessions and branches, 579 children and 172 adults joined in.

We sent regional support staff out to the libraries participating in NSS to meet and greet each special guest, introduce them to library staff, take photos and generally make sure that our involvement in NSS 2013 did not pull branch library staff away from looking after other members in the library at that time.

Our Children's and Youth Services team developed session plans for the smooth running of the story time, and included the guest reader spot at 11 am as the highlight. Geelong Libraries offer a suite of early years literacy programs, all of which are firmly based in pedagogical and child development theory, and aim to help babies and children appreciate language and reading and encourage parent participation and a general love of libraries. We have an extensive in-house staff training program based on these principles, and all staff members who deliver any of these programs have undergone the training. We also deliver talks for new parents, in partnership with Maternal and Child Health Services. These talks focus on the importance of introducing early language development practices to babies from birth. The sessions include a discussion of the stages of language and literacy development in children, guidelines for parents regarding appropriate books and other resources to foster language and literacy, and a shortened version of

the Baby Time sessions offered in libraries across the region, so parents know what to expect when they attend one.

Each of our NSS sessions was tailored to suit local needs so no two sessions were the same. Neither were any two readings by our wonderful special guest readers. There was plenty of audience participation of the oft-repeated "You're in the wrong book!" Some readings went for a few minutes while one should probably be in the Guinness Book of Records, at about 25 minutes. Some sessions included a geography lesson by means of a discussion with the children of the whole concept of 'national' and 'simultaneous', and just where are Broome, Alice Springs, Hobart and Mildura anyway?

Most sessions included projection of the pages onto a screen, so that large audiences could all view the illustrations, and one even had five children act out the roles of those characters who were in the wrong book.

The Mayor of the City of Greater Geelong looked resplendent in his Nicholas Ickle top hat, that he most graciously agreed to wear as he read the story with great verve and enthusiasm – until the puppet rat crept up on his shoulder from behind!

It was terrific to have people of local significance visiting our libraries, greeting staff and getting down and having fun with local children.

And you can be sure that no matter what book you put your nose into, it will never be the wrong book because there is no such thing. For every book there is a reader and for every reader there is a book. Long live reading!

Alison Katona

Executive Manager Library and Learning Services, Geelong Regional Library
alison.katona@grlc.vic.gov.au