

NATIONAL YEAR OF READING: THE CAMPAIGN THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

More than a year has passed since the National Year of Reading campaign ended, but the connections, activities and achievements continue. In this issue of INCITE you will find news about Cowzat!, the app that won the World Digital Book Awards top prize in New York, in January. And, of course, the Love2Read brand and The Reading Hour event are legacy items that continue to build momentum through libraries across Australia.

It is only now, 12 months after the event, that the extent of the campaign can be fully appreciated. As a member of ALIA, one of the founder partners of the National Year of Reading, you can feel justly proud of what was achieved during the campaign, which lives on through the work of our Public Libraries Advisory Committee and ALIA Schools Group.

While it is difficult to quantify the commercial return of the National Year of Reading to authors, illustrators, publishers and booksellers, the level of activity suggests that this was significant and we had many individual messages providing anecdotal evidence supporting this claim.

We toured 15 authors around Australia, providing more than 70 events, mainly in libraries. While some events were in metropolitan areas, our focus was on regional and remote part of the country, where authors are rarely able to visit.

Author Frances Watts told us, "One of the most memorable events I did was in Coober Pedy. In a single session I spoke to the entire school, from the childcare kids right up to year 7. In a remote location like Coober Pedy, most kids would never get to meet an author, so it was great that every single child had the chance to participate in an author visit."

We arranged for playwrights-, poets- and writers-in-residence in workplaces around Australia, including Andrew Croome at Mt Stromlo Observatory in the ACT, Kaye Aldenhoven worked with NT National Parks, David Stavanger with Social Money Solutions in Queensland, Sophie Hansen with NSW farming concerns, Emilie Zoey Baker with museums around Victoria, Sean Munro with Metro Tasmania, Stephen Orr at Banrock Station in South Australia, and a series of writers in WA working with the Read Write Now adult literacy program.

Stephen Orr said, "For the first time in my life I was a writer in the outback: I was the first author Roxby had ever had – the tyranny of distance (and money) had kept others away. It was first contact, and the locals were in for a penny and a pound. Roxby taught me that Australia is really big, and that the stories shouldn't all come from Sydbrismeladelperth".

The cost of the campaign at a national level was \$1.7 million. In addition, we estimate there was \$5.6 million-worth of in-kind support. Partners contributed what they felt the project needed or deserved (Disney Junior, for example, produced a high quality TV advertisement for The Reading Hour and ran it free on the Disney Channel in the run-up to The Reading Hour). For most recipients, the cost of participation was free.

The promotional tools were primarily shared branding (available to all free of charge), print collateral including posters, bookmarks and wall charts made available free to libraries, our highly active website – updated at least twice a week, and our even more active social media sites – 12,000 online followers for Love2Read Facebook, Twitter and our enewsletter. Public relations were always incredibly important, as we had no budget for advertising. In terms of editorial coverage and free advertising alone, we gained \$26 million worth of media coverage.

We know that more than 2,000 libraries across Australia participated, running more than 4,000 events across the year, involving more than 200,000 active participants.

Our original budget for carrying out the campaign was \$7 million and, thanks to a highly active program of partnerships, we managed to pull off nearly all the activities we wanted to do at a national level on the much reduced figure of \$1.7 million.

We can see clearly that there has been an incredibly high level of return on investment (ROI). If we just look at the \$1.7 million invested against the value of the media coverage generated and the in-kind support provided, this gives us an ROI of \$18.59 for every \$1 invested.

And if we look at the \$1.7 million against the 200,000 direct participants alone (ignoring the wider community awareness-raising), it has cost just \$8.50 per person for a potentially life-changing experience.



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