

SUMMER/AUTUMN 2026

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FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARIES

BYRON SHIRE

Left: **Sassy Story**

Time Chair – Young Mullumbimby local, reading at Mullumbimby Library on the Sassy Story Time Chair purchased by FOLBS to support children's literacy programs and whimsical reading enjoyment! (signed permission sought to photograph child and promote image).

Top right: **FOL Home Library** – Barbara Barrett, Catherine White, Cathy Small and Chris Chaseling supporting ongoing Home Library deliveries.

Bottom right: **Friends of the Library Byron Shire Mobile Library Launch 2022** – active members supporting library outreach events.



**DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS ENRICHING SERVICES
AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT
BYRON BAY, MULLUMBIMBY AND BRUNSWICK HEADS LIBRARIES**

The national voice for 13 million Public Library Members

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Inspiring stories for Friends give encouragement to us all.



Canadian Friends

A recent communication from Canada tells us about our ever-changing world of Friends of Libraries and the vital role they play, despite many challenges. An email from Graeme Matchuk of *Matchuk Insights* informed me of recent undertakings in Canada in an effort to rebuild the Friends network, after the collapse of Friends of Libraries Canada (FOCAL) in 2016. FOLA, for many years undertook a close relationship with this national body for Friends of Libraries in Canada. Despite the intervening ten years, many Friends remain on the local scene, undertaking similar work to us in Australia.

As a consequence of this email from Graeme, FOLA will be revisiting our relationship with Canada, as our national interests in Friends groups are more aligned, than say the USA. An interesting piece of research undertaken by *Matchuk Insights* highlights similar issues in Australia. The full report is worth reading: <https://matchukinsights.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/2025-canadian-friends-survey-results.pdf>

Advocacy in America

The importance of advocacy for Friends was recently highlighted in an American report 2025 *EveryLibrary Impact Report: Standing Up For Libraries*.

The threats to libraries, librarians, and readers in 2025 included censorship, funding erosion, and unprecedented political interference.



At the federal level, President Trump fired the Librarian of Congress. Across the States, Texas criminalized librarianship, South Dakota nearly closed its state library and locally county commissions continued to censor books and discriminate against their own readers.

And don't believe it cannot happen in Australia. Recent events at the State Library of Victoria late last year give concern.

Leadership

At the AGM of FOLA, our Board member Dr Mariella Totaro-Genevois intimated her decision not to stand for re-election. Over some 20 years, Mariella has given distinguished service to FOLA and importantly to the Friends of the Balmain Library (NSW), where today, this Friends group is one of the outstanding achievers at all levels of the Friends movement in Australia. A detailed recognition of Mariella will be given in our next newsletter.

And finally, my Christmas Lunch was a reminder of FOLA, with Backyard Cricket at the youngest level. Inspirational!

Daniel Ferguson



"Over some 20 years, Mariella has given distinguished service to FOLA and importantly to the Friends of the Balmain Library (NSW)."

"FOLA will be revisiting our relationship with Canada, as our national interests in Friends groups are more aligned"



FOLA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2 0 2 5

Dear FOLA Members,

"Our 31st year has been one of many important achievements."

As we approach the end of 2025, I'm conscious that, from FOLA's perspective, 2024 was always going to be a tough act to follow. Celebrating our 31st anniversary doesn't have quite the same resonance as last year's 30th, which, you may recall, featured an epic event at the State Library of New South Wales, including our two wonderful patrons, the Hon Michael Kirby and author and national treasure Tom Keneally.

"FOLA's board has committed a remarkable amount of time."

In actuality, our 31st year has been one of many important achievements as we continue work along three critical fronts:

- Our historic efforts support existing local friends groups, including advocating on their behalf when local libraries may be threatened by council actions
- Widening FOLA's remit of advocating for better public libraries for the 13-million Australians that are members of at least one library, and,
- Advocating and fund-raising to support the smallest, most isolated and economically disadvantaged public libraries in Australia.

"Country libraries are an under-recognised and potentially powerful vector to deliver improved educational opportunities"

I want to say a few words about each of these activities to give you an idea of the breadth of FOLA's efforts in support of the institutions we all love so dearly.

This year FOLA's board has committed a remarkable amount of time and effort to its partnership with the LBW Trust, which involves raising funds to support the most disadvantaged country libraries across Australia to deliver better



educational experiences to their communities. In 2025 the LBW Trust received \$140,000 in grants to support the smallest and most isolated libraries across Western Australia. The vast majority of the funds came from the Channel 7 Telethon, an annual fundraiser in Perth that generates more than \$90-million per year to medical and educational assistance to ill and disadvantaged children across rural WA.

How did such a remarkable grant come about? The LBW Trust reached out to FOLA after we

continued on following page.



Kununurra School & Community Library, WA

FOLA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2 0 2 5



Broome Public Library float



Carnavon Public Library

published our 2024 Australia-first research report into the systemic disadvantage faced by Australia's country libraries. That report, "Overlooked, Underfunded, Outsized Social and Economic Impact: Why Australia Needs to Invest in Country Libraries" focused on the eastern states of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

At LBW's request, FOLA developed a supplement to expand the analysis to include Western Australia, and the data showed that the situation is even more extreme in Australia's largest (by geography) state, where about 10 percent of the population resides in some of the most isolated locations in the world. The report formed the foundation for the LBW Trust's application to the Telethon, which successfully argued that country libraries are an under-recognised and potentially powerful vector to deliver improved educational opportunities to geographically disadvantaged infants, toddlers, school children and teenagers.

FOLA's challenge was to engage with these libraries to encourage them to apply for grants, and to assist them with developing ideas that would resonate with their local communities. In the event, 66 libraries across 44 local government areas, including 16 with populations of fewer than 1,000, applied for and received funding.

What sorts of things did the funding go to? Among the grants were astronomy experiences, including Indigenous themed stargazing, bird-

watching kits to teach "citizen science," myriad STEM/STEAM holiday programs with science kits from our partner Children's Discovery, and lots of musical instruments, authors' talks, and much more. Many of these activities, which are often taken for granted at well-funded metropolitan libraries, were brand new in rural Western Australia, representing transformative educational experiences for the young people in those communities.

We are now at the stage of helping these communities acquit their funding. If we are fortunate, we will impress the Telethon team with our successes and they will consider providing funding in the future for us to continue to grow this wonderful initiative.

At the same time, FOLA's Founder and Executive Director, Daniel Ferguson has continued to use our newsletter to share stories from across Australia and the world about best practice in public library service provision. The newsletter continues to be printed on glossy stock paper, in colour, thanks to our foundation sponsor, Bolinda Publishing. The most recent edition of the newsletter features a reflection on our 30-year relationship with Bolinda, and I encourage you to read it, if you have not already done so. The newsletter is now circulating to more than 250 Friends groups and public libraries across Australia, further spreading word of our work and role in the sector.

"Many of these activities, which are often taken for granted at well-funded metropolitan libraries, were brand new in rural Western Australia."

"The newsletter continues to be printed on glossy stock paper, in colour, thanks to our foundation sponsor, Bolinda Publishing."

"Country libraries are an under-recognised and potentially powerful vector."

FOLA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2 0 2 5

"we have been approached by a group in Far North Queensland regarding their local council's intention to close their branch library and require residents to travel 13 kilometres to the main library."



Katanning Public Library



Yungaburra Public Library

"The objective is to show the local council how important the library is to this community."

And this brings me to the third part of our mission: Speaking out publicly and assisting when libraries are threatened, often in Australia by local councils that seek to save money by cutting budgets. This work remains a regular if periodic activity for FOLA's board. In the last six weeks we have been approached by a group in Far North Queensland regarding their local council's intention to close their branch library and require residents to travel 13 kilometres to the main library. While this may not sound like much, for working people, families with children, the elderly, and those without transport, this is an untenable situation.

FOLA has worked with this community to help them develop plans for a local community action group, to raise awareness of the broad-based support to preserve the library and to expand its role as a community information centre and via better connections with the local primary school. The objective is to show the local council how important the library is to this community, and to ensure the elected councillors understand that their role is to ensure the long-term vibrancy of the community by supporting essential institutions and services like the library.

"As I write, the State Library of Victoria – one of the largest and most expansive libraries in Australia – is facing its own budget crisis"

As I write, the State Library of Victoria – one of the largest and most expansive libraries in Australia – is facing its own budget crisis, with plans being proposed to retrench large numbers of librarians and reduce service and technologies – including internet connected computers

– available to the public. This demonstrates that politicians at all levels of government are capable of demonstrating short-sightedness and ignorance when it comes to attacking and diminishing investment in public libraries.

A final thought: We are fortunate that in Australia most of the challenges we face in defending and advocating for public libraries are finance-related. Overseas in the United States, public libraries have been caught in the culture wars with some citizens and political groups attempting to force them to censor books that they deem inappropriate for their community. This attack on the idea of the public library as a place free from censorship has led to the release of a new documentary, *The Librarians*, funded in part by the actress Sarah Jessica Parker.

Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to FOLA's mission of better public libraries for all in Australia. Please reach out to us to discuss how we can all work together in 2026 to make our mission a reality for more communities and their residents who deserve access to better lifelong learning opportunities.

Warm regards,

Jack Goodman
President, FOLA

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2 0 2 5

The highlight of the past year was undoubtedly FOLA's 30th celebration at the State Library of New South Wales, held on 24th October 2024. A gathering with many notables, including our patron, Thomas Keneally AO, our founding patron the Hon Michael Kirby AC, CMG and the State Librarian of NSW, Dr Caroline Butler-Bowden. This gathering of more than eighty-five Friends present, were welcomed by FOLA president, Jack Goodman. We received letters from a number of Friends who were not able to be present, including our foundation president, the Hon Margaret Lusink AM. Greeting on our anniversary was also received from well-known Australian author and social researcher Hugh Mackay AO, another friend of FOLA over the past 30 years. Highlights of the event can be found in FOLA *NewsUpdate* (Issue 109/10).

During the past twelve months, our president Jack Goodman has devoted much time and professional capacity into expanding our LBW Country Libraries project. Since the initial collaboration was established in 2021 between The LBW Trust and FOLA, this project has developed in scope and funds provided to country public libraries around Australia. In 2024, 79 country libraries were the recipients of much need funding totalling \$101,429 for a wide variety of programs including: digital literacy for seniors, textile waste awareness workshops, resources for neurodivergent young people, a community seed library for bush fire affected Snowy Mountains area and storytelling through puppetry. As FOLA president has stated: "Country libraries are at the heart of the community, providing havens where people of all ages and backgrounds can come together to share ideas, learn new skills and connect with each other. These grants are another example of the exceptional projects being run by Australia's under-funded and under-valued country public libraries."



Hard-working volunteer in the RedB4 bookshop.



New Media for Benalla Library, installed with help from Friends of the Benalla Library.



Very good Friends of the Benalla Library – Betty, Christine, Geraldine and Corrie.

Much of the essential work of FOLA and Friends groups continue throughout the country, just as thirty years ago. However, as with many libraries, change has occurred in the way services are delivered, in particular as a result of new technologies. One factor affecting all Friends in recent years has been the increasing age of membership and the ability in forming a viable committee structure for Friends groups.

"During the past twelve months, our president Jack Goodman has devoted much time and professional capacity into expanding our LBW Country Libraries project."

"Country libraries are at the heart of the community, providing havens where people of all ages and backgrounds can come together to share ideas,"



Dr Alan Bundy

Christl
Markovic

Gretchen Sleeman



Margaret Broeks

Dr Alan
Brissenden

“However, FOLA’s continuing aim is to address how we can contribute to the national scene of better libraries services for all.”

Despite this, some outstanding groups are still delivering vital impetus to the operations of many libraries. A few examples: East Gippsland (Vic), Wollongong (NSW), Balmain (NSW), State Library of SA (SA), Paynesville (Vic), Benalla (Vic), Victor Harbor (SA), Wingecarribee (NSW), Wagga Wagga (NSW), Mount Gambier (SA), Launceston (Tas), Euroa (Vic), Mansfield (Vic), Byron Bay (NSW), Alexandra (Vic) and the National Library of Australia (ACT).

As reported in the FOLA newsletter *NewsUpdate*, most FOL groups continue to undertake a variety of activities much the same in previous years: Author talks (Wingecarribee, Wollongong, State Library SA), Literary events (Launceston, State Library of SA, Balmain), Book Clubs (East Gippsland, Balmain), Booksales (Mansfield, Paynesville, Victor Harbor). And some Friends celebrated notable years of service: Friends of the University of Sydney (60 years), Friends of Euroa (30 years), Friends of Byron Bay (30 years). While these remain great achievements, the success of Friends being able to continue into the coming years will require a fresh inspiration and approach to how we all undertake our work. This is perhaps one reason for FOLA, as the national organization looking to new avenues for our future. This will be the challenge for all Friends groups in the coming years.

The inspirational leaders, as in the past such as, Dr Alan Brissenden (FSLSA), Margaret Broeks (Altona), Christl Markovic (Stirling), Gretchen Sleeman (Wagga Wagga), Dr Alan Bundy (FOLA) need to be found for our continuing survival. It’s a big challenge.

FOLA has been greatly blessed with some generous donors over our thirty-one years. None more so, than our founding sponsor – Bolinda. In more recent years, our partnership with The LBW Trust, who have supported Friends groups around the country with funds for our Country Libraries project.

While we have some 1,700 public libraries around Australia, we still have too few Friends groups, just a few 95 active groups. However, FOLA’s continuing aim is to address how we can contribute to the national scene of better libraries services for all. This was a basic challenge from our previous FOLA president Dr Alan Bundy AM, and remains a goal of our present incumbent, Jack Goodman.

FOLA has continued to connect with the worldwide Friends movement in other countries, and this offers some guidance and understanding of the challenges we all face together.

Another partner for FOLA was our first president. This remarkable woman, the Hon Mrs. Margaret (Peg) Lusink AM recently celebrated her 103rd birthday in Melbourne. It was my great pleasure to visit Peg and wish her both a happy birthday and continued health on behalf of FOLA. Surely another remarkable achievement in her distinguished career as a Family Court judge and Dean of Law School at Bond University.

And in conclusion, our organization, along with so many Friends groups must adapt to our changing environment to continue to dedicate ourselves to creating better libraries and services for all. And finally, thank you to our remarkable president, Jack Goodman who has been a catalyst for growth and change within FOLA.

“Over the decades, that friendship has grown into something much greater – a partnership grounded in shared values, mutual respect, and a commitment to the role libraries play as vital, democratic and welcoming spaces for all Australians.”

**Rebecca and Jan Hermann,
Bolinda (FOLA Foundation Sponsor)**

Daniel Ferguson

Executive Director & Founder

“The success of Friends being able to continue into the coming years will require a fresh inspiration and approach to how we all undertake our work.”

BYRON SHIRE FRIENDS

A COMMITTED COMMUNITY IN 2026 WITH 60 MEMBERS



Solli Rafael & Beryl Main – Vice President (FOLBS) Beryl Main with award winning poet and creative role model Solli Rafael, at Brunswick Heads Library for a young people in the library event.

Friends of the Libraries Byron Shire have been operating as a dynamic, community driven group since 1995, anchoring a committed community in 2026 with 60 members. Our dedicated volunteers enrich value added services and strengthen community engagement across our three Northern Rivers regional libraries: Byron Bay, Mullumbimby and Brunswick Heads Libraries.

It's an important time for community groups to support libraries, but an exciting time too as our regional public libraries continue to evolve as dynamic community hubs. Over the past 18 months our Shire Libraries have delivered new opportunities to a vast demographic, rich in diversity with one target group being our young people. The FOLBS group helped turn some of these aspirations into reality! The group supported literary events, extending funding and supporting events at all branches, connecting young students with contemporary Australian authors and illustrators including a session with

natural history illustrator Sami Bayly and a school curriculum aligned workshop with award winning poet Solli Rafael.

The expanding role of the local library service brings financial and staffing resource challenges. The extended funding raised by FOLBS at their annual community book fair, combined with the volunteer people power at events is a powerful testament to libraries and the work by FOLBS which contributes to educational outcomes and connecting people to community.

Our FOLBS are community leaders when it comes to building social cohesion in and around our local libraries. For a number of years, they have been planning and delivering community adult author talks with emerging, local, or nationally recognised and well-loved Australian Authors, not only providing enriching engagement opportunities locally but growing and strengthening relationships between people and networks through togetherness, information and ideas.

When asked what she enjoys most about being

"The expanding role of the local library service brings financial and staffing resource challenges."

"Our FOLBS are community leaders when it comes to building social cohesion."



It was our end of year Christmas get together and what a year we have had. A new president in Catherine White thanked everyone for the work they had done in 2025, and is looking forward to 2026.

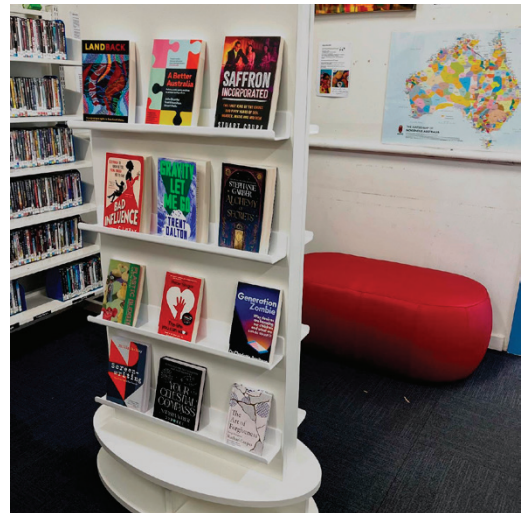
“advocating for the love of literature, lifelong learning, and encouraging curiosity and reading among young people.”

part of FOL, Vice President Beryl Main shared: “It’s advocating for the love of literature, lifelong learning, and encouraging curiosity and reading among young people. The collaborative culture and friendships within FOL are so rewarding, spending time with people who share a common purpose.”

Beryl added, “Leading a team of volunteers who give tirelessly to make our libraries well-used, welcoming places is fulfilling. Hearing the generous words of appreciation from staff and community in acknowledgement of our achievements. As a member of FOL, you have an opportunity to make a difference alongside like-minded people with a passion for reading and learning who support our community on that journey. So important in volunteering, is the joy of being part of a group making a positive contribution”.

“Leading a team of volunteers who give tirelessly to make our libraries well-used, welcoming places is fulfilling.”

We look forward to 2026 with so much to celebrate about Friends of the Libraries Byron Shire. Their community driven approach leads to relevant and sustainable collections and services. This collaborative ethos translates into locally responsive grassroots improvements like the home library service they support through delivery, our established Quick Reads collection that they fund, well-resourced new book displays, new furniture and even custom-made Sassy Story Time chairs enhancing the everyday experience of our beautiful regional libraries, here for the Byron Shire community.



We have recently donated funds to Brunswick Heads branch library to purchase this new double sided stand & ottoman for taking a seat whilst browsing the new titles just in. Have you seen it yet? Go and have a look, grab a book & put up your feet. Thanks from all the team of staff from Bruns and thanks for all our volunteers who worked hard to make these funds available.

Friends of Libraries Byron Shire

4 DAY BOOK FAIR!

Fri 11 - Mon 14 July, 9am to 4pm
BYRON BAY SURF CLUB

LIBRARY LOVERS' DAY SPECIAL EVENT

HANDMADE WITH LOVE

MAKE A CARD FOR SOMEONE SPECIAL

BYRON BAY LIBRARY THURSDAY 12 FEBRUARY
3-5PM
BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL 6685 8540

Richmond Tweed Regional Library
Connect. Discover. Escape.

Bridging the Divide: Supporting Country Libraries

TELETHON 7 WA LIBRARIES IMPACT REPORT 2025

WYALKATCHEM LIBRARY

Population

358

Location

Wheatbelt

ICSEA*

870

(63% in bottom quartile SEA)

Amount

\$3,373.76

Spent on:

Purchase of Storytime Science materials, programmable robots and an activity table.



Each session was attended by 5-10 participants, aged 2 to 13. The children were from farming and rural backgrounds and the sessions were led by a facilitator who is a paraplegic. "We believe that positive exposure at a young age fosters empathy, inclusion and acceptance as they grow older, helping to build a more understanding and inclusive community."



*ICSEA is the Index for Community Socio-Economic Advantage. More information is available at myschool.edu.au.

"We believe that positive exposure at a young age fosters empathy, inclusion and acceptance"

KAMBALDA LIBRARY

Population

5,000

Location

Goldfields

ICSEA

857

(75% in bottom quartile SEA)

Amount

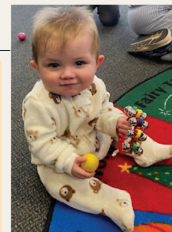
\$2,500.00

Spent on:

Purchase of musical instruments for young children.

On 7 Nov. 2025 the library hosted a vibrant and engaging music session for children aged 0-5...What made this session truly special was its ability to bring people together. The event was attended by families from various cultural backgrounds who had not previously interacted with one another.

The success of this session has inspired us to continue offering music-based activities for all ages. For older children (6-10 years) we will integrate music into a learning experience that combines rhythm with basic mathematical concepts.



"What made this session truly special was its ability to bring people together."

PERENJORI LIBRARY

Population

635

Location

Mid-West

ICSEA

933

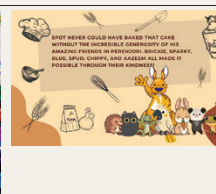
(41% in bottom quartile SEA)

Amount

\$2,200.00

Spent on:

To run a series of children's workshops to create a storybook that reflects the community of Perenjori.



A diverse group of 14 children - boys and girls, some First Nations background - participated in the Kindy Kids project to create a children's book. "The project has ignited a wave of excitement among the parents of the Kindy Kids! The children are absolutely thrilled about the book and buzzing with ideas for their next creative venture."



"The project has ignited a wave of excitement among the parents."

“Families developed a strong sense of belonging and connection.”

CUNDERDIN LIBRARY

Population
1,200

Location
Wheatbelt

ICSEA
960
(46% in bottom quartile SEA)

Amount
\$1,000.00

Spent on:
To purchase craft materials for a Tiny Tots monthly program for toddlers.



30 infants, toddlers and small children, from ages 1 to 5, including 2 with disabilities and 2 from ESL families, gather for a monthly, themed event of hands-on activities, craft and story-telling. “Families developed a strong sense of belonging and connection, supporting positive early childhood development and wellbeing outcomes.”



“Our LEGO Education Spike Essential STEAM Learning and Coding Program engaged 37 Indigenous and non-Indigenous children.”

NARROGIN LIBRARY

Population
4,983

Location
Wheatbelt

ICSEA
937
(47% in bottom quartile SEA)

Amount
\$6,000.00

Spent on:
To purchase a LEGO Education Spike Essential STEAM 10-pack



Our LEGO Education Spike Essential STEAM Learning and Coding Program engaged 37 Indigenous and non-Indigenous children between the ages of 5 and 17, including 7 with disabilities in a regular STEM/coding activity. The focus was “The Home Crew,” supporting families who are not currently in main-stream schools, are home-schooling, doing distance education. We also partnered with the local Special Education class at Narrogin High School. Finally, the kits also formed part of our weekly after-school LEGO Club helping us expand our monthly challenges.



“They learned valuable skills and enjoyed hands-on experience about glass blowing,”

BEVERLEY CRC & LIBRARY

Population
1,700

Location
Wheatbelt

ICSEA
932
(52% in bottom quartile SEA)

Amount
\$2,000

Spent on:
To fund a 6-session Astronomy program for primary school aged children



The “Learn About Astronomy-Starting from the Basics” program was developed by the Beverley Community Resource Centre and Library and Brian, a local retired maths and science teacher with a passion for astronomy. 9 children (boys and girls, aged 8-11) from Beverley Primary School participated in the six-session program. They learned valuable skills and enjoyed hands-on experience about glass blowing, the physics of light, how telescopes work and learning how to use a telescope to gaze at the night sky. Feedback from the children and their parents was exceptional, including from two neuro-divergent children who do not enjoy traditional after-school sports. According to Brian, “The children’s enthusiasm and engagement was notable. They learnt about the great care required to operate a scientific instrument, and their skills advanced significantly with aiming and focusing the telescope.”

“The children “absolutely loved” the experience, and because they “live in remote areas [they] often miss out on opportunities.”

PORT HEDLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY

Population
17,000

Location
Pilbara

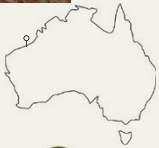
ICSEA
989
(60% in bottom half SEA)

Amount
\$2,500

Spent on:
To fund the purchase of Storytime Science for toddlers



124 pre-school children (~7% Indigenous) and 25 adults participated in the STEM Storytime program, using playful props and exploring STEM concepts through hands-on activities. The children “absolutely loved” the experience, and because they “live in remote areas [they] often miss out on opportunities. The library is working hard to bridge that gap...The Storytime Science Kits...include copies of the books, facilitator guides and STEM and craft equipment...Most importantly, this project is ongoing, which means we will continue providing STEM learning experiences to children in the Port Hedland area at no cost to daycares or families.”



Bridging the Divide: Supporting Country Libraries

TELETHON 7 WA LIBRARIES IMPACT REPORT 2025

BALINGUP LIBRARY

Population
565

Location
Southwest

ICSEA
998
(33% in bottom quartile SEA)

Amount
\$1,167

Spent on:
Author visits and play production for the Telling Tales Festival



In July, 2025 the town of Balingup held its annual Telling Tales Festival. This grant was used to enable the community to bring professional authors and performers to the community to run literacy sessions with children aged 8 to 15, and to perform a production of Mary and Frankenstein, a 30-minute play about Mary Shelley and her famous horror story, delivered in the town theatre and attended to a packed house.



“This grant was used to enable the community to bring professional authors and performers to the community.”

BROOME PUBLIC LIBRARY

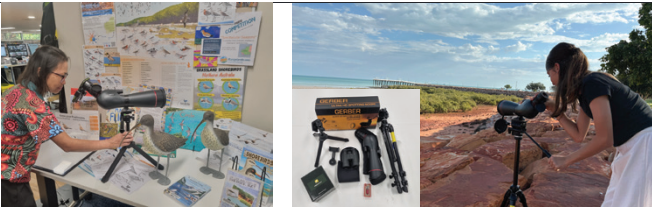
Population
17,215

Location
Kimberley

ICSEA
856
(49% in bottom quartile SEA)

Amount
\$1,140

Spent on:
a bird-watching kit for children to learn about citizen science



This project was designed to provide local children in the remote community of Broome with access to birdwatching equipment to engage them in the activities of citizen science. Roebuck Bay is an internationally protected wetland under the UN's Ramsar designation, and it's essential that the community is educated about the importance of the environment, if we are going to help to protect it. The beauty of purchasing equipment like this is that the benefits of the funding will go on and on into the future, as families will be able to loan it for many years to come. As of November, 2025 13 families have borrowed the kit (for a fortnight each), and we expect many more. There is no other place for children and families to gain access to this type of equipment or learning experience.



“13 families have borrowed the kit (for a fortnight each), and we expect many more.”

MOORA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Population
2,292

Location
Wheatbelt

ICSEA
927
(48% in bottom quartile SEA)

Amount
\$5,000

Spent on:
A five-day film-making course for children in the community



Moora is a small farming community in the Wheatbelt region. The Library organised a five-day film-making program which was delivered by the Filmbytes Screen Academy. Children from the age of 8 and up spent a week engaged in learning the skills and techniques of storytelling through film. “The kids loved it.” A 16-year-old was so engaged he is “seriously considering a job in film making.” Another participant is autistic and his mum said she was amazed at how engaged he was, as he usually finds it difficult to join in. The library would like to make this a regular program, and it hopes to attract more participants as “country kids find it hard to relate to these types of creative industry and technology-based activities, due to them not happening much here.”

“Children from the age of 8 and up spent a week engaged in learning the skills and techniques of storytelling through film..”

“The programs ensured accessibility and inclusivity for all families.”

“As our family do home schooling it was fun being with the other kids and doing craft activities.”

“The Augusta Library session drew the highest number of attendees, highlighting how rare and valued such workshops are in the local community.”

MOUNT BARKER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Population
6,734

Location
Great Southern

ICSEA
945
(49% in bottom quartile SEA)

Amount
\$5,000

Spent on:
Two professional day-time astronomy programs for children in the community



At Mount Barker 62 children between the ages of 5 and 14 participated in two highly interactive daytime astronomy programs. The programs ensured accessibility and inclusivity for all families and enhanced the library's reputation as a trusted provider of innovative educational programs. "The children were thrilled to look through a telescope for the first time and see the Sun's black spots an Saturn's rings. The parents expressed heartfelt gratitude for having such a professional program offered locally and free of charge. By bringing this experience to Mount Barker, the library not only showcased the beauty of our clear skies but also enabled the community to connect with the universe and with each other.

WAROONA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Population
3,400

Location
South West

ICSEA
919
(64% in bottom quartile SEA)

Amount
\$500

Spent on:
A local children's author talk with craft activity



Local author Jeannette Stampone came to the Waroona Public Library to read her book Dragon Guest Handbook and participate in a craft activity. Children between the ages of 3 and 12 participated, including some who are home schooled. A 9-year old said: "I loved that she used the TV while she read the book so all the little children could see the pictures." A 7-year old said: As our family do home schooling it was fun being with the other kids and doing craft activities." A 3-year old said: "Look at my mask! I look like a real dragon!"

AUGUSTA & MARGARET RIVER LIBRARIES

Population
Augusta 5,595
Margaret River 8,918

Location
South West

ICSEA
981 (Augusta)
(36% in bottom quartile SEA)

Amount
\$3,058

Spent on:
Supersonic Science Workshops at both libraries



The Supersonic Science workshops, held at Augusta and Margaret River libraries during the school holidays, reached full capacity with 52 children and 30 adults attending two sessions. Participants ranged in age from 5 to 14, with a roughly even mix of boys and girls.

The Augusta Library session drew the highest number of attendees, highlighting how rare and valued such workshops are in the local community. Parents confirmed this sentiment after the event, saying, "I think it is fabulous that you have got this for Augusta, very exciting."

One parent shared, "My kids both left wanting to 'do science' when they grow up," while another commented, "Fantastic! We were at Augusta Library—plenty of space for everyone, and the hosts were amazing with the kids."



FRIENDS OF L/BRARIES AUSTRALIA



Focus on Friends

MIRBOO NORTH (VIC)



A recent article in the *Mirboo North Times* giving a big shout-out to our local library is music to the ears of the volunteers who make up the Friends of the Mirboo North Library. We know the treasure trove of resources, events and programs that can be found and explored there, and it is always great to hear the thrill of discovery from a new library member.

Each of the Friends groups in our region raises funds to support projects or programs that they have identified to be of particular interest or need for their library branch; there are book sales and author talks, and for the Mirboo North Friends, there is an intensive two weeks of opportunity shop duties.

In recent years, the Friends of Mirboo North Library has successfully advocated for additional opening hours for the library and provided thousands of dollars each year through our various fundraising efforts to purchase new reading and educational resources for use in the library. These contributions include a big screen TV, Xbox, Xbox games, wireless

headphones and iPads proudly funded by the Friends. We have supported programs like the monthly Lego Club (for which the Friends have purchased several Lego sets), book chats in cafes, storytime in the park and the very popular pizzas for young people.

The Friends of Library groups in South Gippsland, Bass Coast and Baw Baw shires play an important part in championing Library services in our region. The contribution that the Friends' volunteers make to promoting and supporting our library services is recognised and acknowledged in Myli's Annual Report for 2024/2025.

Operational funding for libraries is falling. It is timely to be reminded that, as emphasised by Public Libraries Victoria, "No other institution offers the same safe and inclusive spaces with free and equal, life-changing access to art, ideas, education and social engagement."

We are proud to be able to promote and enhance the vital public service that our libraries bring to our communities.

"We are proud to be able to promote and enhance the vital public service that our libraries bring to our communities."

"the Friends of Mirboo North Library has successfully advocated for additional opening hours for the library."



New shelving units thanks to Friends of Mirboo North Library!



Friends Around Australia



“Everyone is welcome — your time and support help keep our library a place for connection and learning.”

ST ARNAUD (VIC)



Join the **Friends of the St Arnaud Library!**

Want to keep our library thriving?

The Friends of the Library is a fun group of locals of all ages who support the library through fundraising, events, and advocacy. Everyone is welcome — your time and support help keep our library a place for connection and learning. Message us to find out how you can get involved!

PAYNESVILLE (VIC)



“Proceeds from the sale will be reinvested into library resources, as part of the Friends’ major annual fundraising effort.”

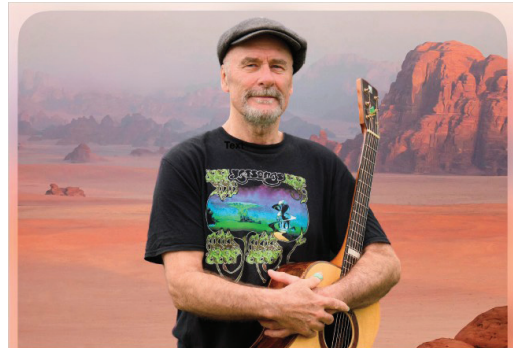
The Friends of Paynesville Library was formed in 2009 by a small group of library users. It aims to support and encourage full use of our excellent free East Gippsland Regional Library Service which covers Paynesville, Raymond Island, Eagle Point and Newlands Arm areas.

BENALLA (VIC)

The Friends of the Benalla Library Inc. is a community group supporting the Benalla Library. Our aims are to:

- Broaden general awareness of the library in the community
- Promote the library’s services and facilities
- Help acquire books and other materials through fundraising activities

LAUNCESTON (TAS)



Live at the Library

Free live performance
Marcus Sturrock

Saturday 21 Feb 2026
from 10.30 am
Launceston Library

Come along!
No bookings required

Marcus is a prolific folk festival artist, travelling across Australia with invitations to be the headline performer.

Marcus’s musical influences are reflected in his original eclectic compositions ranging from Folk, Funk, Celtic, World, Classical, Blues and Roots to Jazz and more.



WOLLONGONG (NSW)

Join **The Friends of Wollongong City Library** for a literary lunch with Susannah Fullerton!

Her latest book, *Great Writers and the Cats Who Owned Them*, explores how cats became the cherished muses of the biggest names in the literary scene, such as Dickens and Hemingway.



WAGGA WAGGA (NSW)

For over thirty years, the **Friends of the Library (FOTL)** volunteers have acted as a link between the library and the community. FOTL is a member of Friends of Libraries Australia (FOLA).

The Friends of the Library Wagga Wagga help raise funds throughout the year and support author talks, One Book One Wagga, the Language Café, Technology classes, Science Festivals, and exciting programs for every age group

Membership Application

CATEGORIES

Membership fee incorporating
News Update

Individual	\$15	☐
FOL Group— 0-25 Members	\$25	☐
FOL Group— 25+ Members	\$50	☐
Libraries	\$105	☐
Institutions incl. Libraries with multiple Friends groups	\$105	☐
Corporations	\$105	☐
Extra copies of News Update	\$10 per annum	☐

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FOLA Inc.
FOLA Treasurer,
Kristina Barnett, 42 Marian
Place, Prospect SA 5082

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FOLA NEWS UPDATE

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