4,000 events
12,000 online followers
200,000 participants

$1.7 million funding
$5.6 million in kind support
$26 million media coverage

$20 return for every $1 invested
The National Year of Reading was adopted at the Australian Library and Information Association Public Libraries Summit, held in July 2009, at the National Library of Australia, in Canberra.

The senior library leaders attending the summit agreed that something needed to be done to address declining levels of literacy in Australia – a study at the time showed that 46% of adults struggled with reading and writing, and in 2010 it was found that 23% of five-year-olds were developmentally vulnerable or at risk of not achieving the language and cognitive skills they will need.

The State Libraries of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia; the public library associations of New South Wales (country and metropolitan), Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia; the Northern Territory Library; Libraries ACT and the Australian Library and Information Association became the 15 founder partners of the campaign.
We have set out in this report to give you a snapshot of the National Year of Reading, but we will be leaving out far more than we can include.

When the 15 founder partners, representing libraries all around Australia, got together to create the National Year of Reading, it was agreed up front that the campaign would be open to everyone. We would put a framework in place—a logo, a few national programs, some partnerships, ambassadors and friends—then we would set it free, inviting anyone and everyone to use the campaign to promote reading in their community.

The great news is that Australians eagerly embraced it. They ran events and activities, they blogged, they branded their websites, they promoted reading in ways we could never even have imagined.

A lot of people did get in touch to let us know what they were doing, but we’re guessing that an equal number didn’t. We found out about some events and activities through our press cuttings service, but inevitably much of what happened locally slipped under the radar.

Here’s a glimpse of just some of the fantastic programs that ran during 2012.
The National Year of Reading 2012 was about children learning to read and keen readers finding new sources of inspiration. It was about supporting reading initiatives while respecting the oral tradition of storytelling. It was about helping people discover and rediscover the magic of books. And most of all, it was about our vision of Australians becoming a nation of readers.

A first step was to define our goals for the National Year of Reading, and we had three objectives in our sights:

**Goal 1** For all Australians to understand the benefits of reading as a life skill and catalyst for wellbeing  
**Goal 2** To promote a reading culture in every home  
**Goal 3** To establish an aspirational goal of sharing a book with your child every day.

We were very fortunate to have writer and actor William McInnes (left) as our National Year of Reading patron. William was incredibly supportive, attending events, visiting libraries and sharing his thoughts about how important reading can be in people’s lives.

As the campaign began to gather momentum, we found other people who shared our vision, and we ended the year with 111 national, state and territory ambassadors (next page), 79 friends, and 230 partner organisations.
L to R, from top row: Ben O'Donoghue, Jennifer Byrne, Wendy Orr, Tania McCartney, Anh Do, Jess Bibby, Steve Parish, Libby Gleeson, Anna Goldsworthy, Anita Heiss, Andy Griffiths, Hazel Edwards, Robert Doyle, Chris Cheng, Kevin Rudd, Felice Arena, Cameron Ilett
Our soft launch in September 2011

The library team at Bialik College, in Melbourne, provided the venue for the soft launch of the National Year of Reading on September 1, 2011, bringing together partners, friends and ambassadors for the very first time.

The library hosted an event for more than 150 National Year of Reading guests, plus Year 10 students from several schools around Victoria. We were joined by Snoopy, Mr Bump and Angelina Ballerina, courtesy of the Entertainment Store Group.

There were storytimes for younger students with National Year of Reading ambassadors Hazel Edwards and Alison Lester.

In the theatre, our patron William McInnes gave an entertaining talk before assisting Writing Australia’s Mary Delahunty to announce the winners of our Adult Learners’ Week short story writing competition It’s Never Too Late ... To Learn To Read. We were able to run the story writing competition again for Adult Learners’ Week in 2012 and overall, we had more than 400 entries.
How it began on 14 February 2012

The national launch event at the National Library of Australia in Canberra, took place on 14 February, with the Prime Minister, the Arts Minister and the School Education Minister all in attendance. They were joined by Senators and Federal MPs, as well as many of our ambassadors, partners and friends.

More than 200 people filled the auditorium to listen to presentations by Julia Gillard, (top) Simon Crean (centre) and Peter Garrett (bottom), our patron William McInnes, award-winning children’s author and Laureate Boori Monty Pryor, and Graeme Innes, Disability Discrimination Commissioner. Children from local schools joined the celebration, and the whole event was brilliantly hosted by the ABC First Tuesday Book Club’s Jennifer Byrne.

The event was judged to be an outstanding success, with participants enjoying the anticipation of a great year ahead. There was the opportunity to preview Disney Junior’s TV advertisement for The Reading Hour and the animation produced to support the public library membership drive.

On the same day, major events took place at every state and territory library around Victoria, attended by Premiers, Arts and Education Ministers, more ambassadors, partners and friends.

The scale of the events, the media coverage and the boost for libraries and other partners around the country gave us a terrific start to the year.
We were looking for a book that would provide us with a theme for the year, and Alison Lester’s much loved picture book describing a journey around Australia gave us a story that resonated with people in every state and territory.

The original illustrations from Are We There Yet? gave us a travelling exhibition, curated by Books Illustrated, which went to a library with gallery space in every state and territory. Whenever she could, Alison dropped by to meet families and school visitors.

Vision Australia created a wonderful Braille version of the book, which travelled with the exhibition, and there was also a competition for children to write a story or draw a picture showing their special place in Australia. Individual prizes included signed copies of Alison’s books; school prizes included visits by other writers and illustrators.

It was an added bonus that Alison and Boori Monty Pryor were named Australia’s first Children’s Laureates in time for 2012 by the Australian Children’s Literature Alliance.
What’s your book pitch?

We knew that teens wouldn’t want to be told what to read – they’d rather tell us about the books they’ve discovered – so we borrowed an idea from the State Library of Victoria and ran a nationwide Creative Reading Prize for 12 to 18-year-olds.

Young people were asked to recommend a book and to pitch it to other readers by creating something extraordinary. Films, songs, poems, artworks, board games – more than 300 entries were received, showing an incredible variety. The judging panel said, ‘the combination of imagination and inspiration led to works which captivate the audience, highlighting the books in such a way that the audience feels a compulsion to go out and find the books, sit down and start reading.’

The State Library of Victoria’s Centre for Youth Literature ran the competition for us, in partnership with Spine Out (the online youth version of Good Reading Magazine). Prizes included personalised collections of manga books from Madman Entertainment, whose design team created an amazing paper art logo for us.
Eight books ~ one for each state and territory

A mystery, a memoir, a journey into the outback, a sinister and haunting tale, an unsolved disappearance, uncontrollable desires, the horrors of war, laughter, heartbreak and a dark secret – you can find all these in the books that Australians decided would be the Our Story collection for 2012.

Between November 2011 and January 2012, more than 16,200 readers voted online through the ABC Arts Gateway and at their local libraries to choose eight titles, one for each state and territory, which provided a reading list for Australia’s biggest book group.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced our winners at the launch of the National Year of Reading on 14 February, 2012, at the National Library of Australia in Canberra.

The winning titles were *Smoke and Mirrors*, by Kel Robertson (ACT); *The Idea of Home*, by John Hughes (NSW); *Listening to Country*, by Ros Moriarty (NT); *The White Earth*, by Andrew McGahan (QLD); *Time’s Long Ruin*, by Stephen Orr (SA); *Wanting*, by Richard Flanagan (TAS); *Well Done, Those Men*, by Barry Heard (VIC) and *Jasper Jones*, by Craig Silvey (WA).
Join your local library

Of course, the whole year provided great promotional opportunities for public libraries to increase their membership, but from May to August we made a special push to persuade the 50% of Australians who weren’t library members to sign up.

Arts Minister Simon Crean launched the initiative at Queanbeyan library (pictured) and we followed through with a library animation, voiced by William McInnes, which was shown on library screens and in cinemas, and with a TV ad for libraries, for which the SBS Foundation provided free airtime.

Although figures were hard to come by, we know anecdotally that some public libraries added several thousand new members as a result of participating in this membership drive.
The idea for The Reading Hour came from colleagues in South Australia. We needed a call to action and this was it – ‘share a book with your child for 10 minutes a day, an hour a week, and give them the gift of reading’.

The Reading Hour was both a call to action and a flagship event for the National Year of Reading. We were lucky to have some great partners for the initiative, including the Walt Disney Company, Scholastic, Dymocks, Dymocks Children’s Charities, ABC Local Radio, the Melbourne Writers Festival and The Big Issue.

Disney Junior created a stunning TV ad for The Reading Hour and aired it in the run up to the event on Saturday 25 August.

Scholastic teamed up with Marvel (part of the Walt Disney Company) to seek out Australia’s greatest reading super hero. The competition was promoted through Scholastic book fairs in schools, a special website and social media, with an estimated reach of 95% of school age children. Posters for schools and some fantastic customised artwork showing Hulk and Spiderman clutching books in their efforts to save the world.

On the day itself, there was big screen fun at the Urban Screen at The Concourse, Chatswood, Sydney, with Marvel reading super heroes and prize giveaways. The event was hosted by Juanita Phillips and Morris Gleitzman, and beamed live to the Cultural Centre Screen in the Perth Cultural Centre (pictures on following page).
The Melbourne Writers Festival threw a Reading Hour party for families, hosted by ABC3’s Kayne and Amberley, with free tickets available from 774 ABC Melbourne (pictured top right). Ahead of 25 August, ABC Local Radio had run competitions across Australia to find young reading champions (under 12s). They flew to Melbourne from all around the country for a ‘money-can’t-buy’ weekend, including being the special guests at the Melbourne Writers Festival Reading Hour party.

*The Big Issue* launched its annual fiction edition, featuring stories by well-known writers to coincide with The Reading Hour, with every edition sold directly helping people who are homeless or disadvantaged.

The Sydney Jewish Writers Festival’s opening night featured a Reading Hour panel discussion with New South Wales Premier Barry O’Farrell and famous name authors.

Other activities included MS Readathon’s 60 MinuteS for MS on 24 August and Kumon Education Centres partnering with libraries to run events for families whose first language wasn’t English.
Reading in the workplace

The Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey 2006 found that 46% of working age Australians struggled with everyday tasks such as reading newspapers, making sense of timetables or filling in OH&S forms. A survey by the Australian Industry Group in May 2010 of major employers found that more than 75% felt their businesses were affected by low levels of literacy and numeracy in the workforce, and the issue was further highlighted by the Industry Skills Council’ No More Excuses report, which came out in 2011.

According to the Productivity Commission’s *Links between literacy and numeracy skills and labour market outcomes*, published in August 2010, an improvement in literacy and numeracy skills from level 1 to level 3 would increase the likelihood of labour force participation by about 15% for women and about 5% for men, and increase hourly wage rates by about 25% for women and 30% for men.

The ability to read with confidence would also contribute to people’s personal well-being, health, social and economic outcomes, and it would help with vocabulary and attention-span.

All this made a strong case for workplace literacy to be a feature of the National Year of Reading.
We identified eight organisations – one per state and territory – to host a writer-in-residence for 10 days. The writers ran workshops for people who wanted to know more about writing, and produced stories about the organisations and the people who worked there. Afterwards, these stories were published.

The first writer-in-residence was Kaye Aldenhoven, who wrote about park rangers in the Northern Territory. The resulting publication has been used by people keen to improve their literacy skills and as a recruitment publication for the parks (picture on previous page).

In South Australia, Stephen Orr was resident writer at Banrock Station winery; ACT, Andrew Croome, Mt Stromlo Observatory; Queensland, David Stavanger, clients of Social Money Solutions; New South Wales, Sophie Hansen, farms via the Department of Primary Industries; Victoria, Emilie Zoey Baker, country museums; Tasmania, Sean Munro, Metro Tasmania. In Western Australia, various writers interviewed clients of literacy organisation Read Write Now about their reading journeys.

We recognised the need to reach non-readers through the workplace and we asked organisations to promote the National Year of Reading initiatives – the Our Story collection of eight books, the public library membership drive, and The Reading Hour – to their employees.

Metricon promoted the National Year of Reading to its employees and ran a special promotion for home buyers, giving out copies of Megan Morton’s book Home Love throughout August 2012 (pictured).
Community storytelling festivals

The Copyright Agency supported our initiative to develop a Festival of Indigenous Reading, Writing and Storytelling in the Northern Territory, as part of the campaign’s focus on Indigenous literacy. There was seed funding for a 2011 festival and further funding to support the 2012 main event. Both took place in September, in the grounds of the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD), in Alice Springs.

The festivals were organised by the IAD Press, the Institute’s publishing arm. In addition to the Copyright Agency funding, support was provided by the IAD Press, Northern Territory Library, the Alice Springs Town Council and the Northern Territory Government. Our aim was to enable the transfer of skills and ideas, to give people working on the ground the opportunity to run their own innovative programs, and to create a community festival, celebrating both the oral and written traditions of storytelling.

The festivals provided a focus for schools and agencies working in Central Australia and more than 100 people from Alice Springs and remote communities gathered for each event. Participants included students from Gillen and Yipirinya primary schools, representatives from Indigenous communities, agencies and philanthropic organisations involved in Indigenous literacy, library staff, authors, illustrators, poets and singer-songwriters.

Both events were broadcast across the Territory by CAAMA Radio.
Just a few of the many local activities ...

**Australian Capital Territory**

Libraries ACT partnered with five schools to bring Year 1 students into their local library for regular visits across the year (top right). Volunteer knitters helped celebrate the completion of Canberra’s longest bookmark, equalling the distance between Dickson and Civic libraries (more than 4km).

**Northern Territory**

The NT was first with the *Are We There Yet?* exhibition and the National Year of Reading writer-in-residence initiative. City of Darwin libraries organised an early morning, peak hour reading flash mob on the side of a busy route into the city.

**New South Wales**

The Powerhouse Museum did lots of events and activities around books and storytelling during the year.

Central West Libraries organised a 24 hour readathon, with pictures of well known locals ‘caught in the act’ posted to Facebook (right).

**Queensland**

The State Library of Queensland created the Dads Read theme and developed a highly successful partnership with Channel 7. The theme was supported by sporting heroes and carried through by public libraries across the state.
South Australia

Public libraries in South Australia were energetic supporters of the National Year of Reading campaign.

Public Library Services SA was the creative force behind The Reading Hour at a national level.

Tasmania

The State Library launched the 2610 adult literacy project and introduced a BookCrossing site – part of the global book swap enterprise (top left).

Victoria

Hobsons Bay Libraries put up street flags in Spotswood, Altona, Williamstown and Laverton (left).

Alison Lester was a special guest at the West Gippsland Regional Library Corporation and Public Libraries Victoria Network beach party wrap up for the Are We There Yet? element of the National Year of Reading.

Western Australia

The State Library of WA ran an open air Love2Read Café in the canopied space in front of the Library, creating a new venue within the Perth Cultural Centre during January and December 2012. The reading room was based on the New York Bryant Park model.

The State Library also partnered with a local operator to put books in laundromats around the city.
After helping us with the Our Story collection of eight books, the ABC First Tuesday Book Club decided to undertake a year-long search for the 10 Aussie Books You Must Read Before You Die. More than 500,000 viewers tuned in to watch the special program in December 2012, when Tim Winton’s *Cloud Street* was named the nation’s number one choice.

*Inside History* magazine was inspired by the search for eight books to be our National Year of Reading collection. It asked readers to choose their favourite history books. The team also provided the *Inside History* app as a free download from the National Year of Reading website.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012 *Year Book Australia*, the 92nd edition in this highly prestigious series, providing a comprehensive overview of Australia at a point in time, featured special articles on the National Year of Reading, the Australian Year of the Farmer and the International Year of Cooperatives.

Children’s picture book *Wilbur*, a joint initiative from the Little Big Book Club and My Language consortium, was first published in 2010 as a book, with three versions, together offering 12 languages. For the National Year of Reading, it was launched as a DVD, featuring the book being read in 13 different languages.
In spring 2012, the State Library of Victoria invited adults and children from around the state to tell a story on a postcard, inspired by an original illustration. More than 2400 postcards were received from writers and artists of all ages and 35 winning entries were made into a book, *Writes of Spring*.

The National Gallery of Australia mounted an exhibition in its children’s gallery for the National Year of Reading. Called Word Pictures, it ran until 10 February 2013.

Sunbeam and Penguin created an on-pack promotion called Feeding Growing Minds. Using barcodes from Sunbeam snacking products, families could claim a free book, as a special National Year of Reading offer.

Penguin and News Ltd got together in October to produce a set of 12 mini books and a book bag for readers in Victoria and Tasmania to collect, as part of the National Year of Reading. The collection appeared in the *Herald Sun* and *The Mercury*.

Inspired by the National Year of Reading, the Light in Winter festival in June, in Federation Square, Melbourne, celebrated the enlightenment from reading (above).

Carpet Court’s Storybook Challenge saw stores running competitions with their local primary schools, giving students the chance to win $1,000 in books and colourful reading mats for their classrooms, as well individual prizes.
On 12 November, 150 guests met at the National Library of Australia, in Canberra, to shape the legacy of the National Year of Reading.

Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC CVO, Governor-General of Australia (right), officially opened the event, and Arts Minister Simon Crean was our keynote speaker.

During the day, the outstanding achievements of the year were a cause for celebration and helped prompt the discussion of what comes next.

The library founding partners agreed to carry the Love2read brand forward into 2013.

During the event, the National Library of Australia launched *Rocket into Space*, a pop up book for children by author and astrophysicist Dr Ragbir Bhathal and Johanna Davids.

Also introduced at our legacy event, by author and contributor Frank Moorhouse, was *The Invisible Thread*, one hundred years of words, edited by Irma Gold.

This was an anthology of stories by writers living in or connected with the ACT. The book was published in 2012 for the Centenary of Canberra, 2013.
The National Year of Reading was made possible through funding from the Australian Government, through the Office for the Arts.

Our National Year of Reading in the workplace project was funded under the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program by the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Our It’s Never Too Late to Learn to Read short story writing competition prize was funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), through Adult Learners’ Week National Grant Funding.

We are grateful to the Australia Council for the Arts for supporting the Australian Children’s Literature Alliance’s Children’s Laureate program, The Reading Hour and the Indigenous literacy project (taking place in 2013).

The Sidney Myer Fund generously provided project management funding in the run up to the National Year of Reading.

The Copyright Agency Ltd provided the funding for our Festivals of Reading, Writing and Storytelling in Alice Springs.

For more information about the National Year of Reading and what comes next, visit us online at love2read.org.au and love2read2012.wikispaces.com.