

2017 / 2018

ANNUAL
REPORT



every day with your child

Acknowledgement:

Thank you to staff and families for allowing us to take these wonderful photographs and use them in this Annual Report.

Margaret Ives Community Children's Centre,
DECD Children's Centre – Cafe Enfield, DECD
Children's Centre – Kaurna Plains, Sturt St
Community School Child Care and iStock.

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Raising Literacy Australia is a Registered Charity

raising
literacy
AUSTRALIA



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Nations who invest in early childhood programs are likely to have stronger economies and societies. It is therefore essential that the first few 1000 days of a child's life are prioritised as a platform for lifelong success. The return on investment is realised through higher education and employment levels, improved health outcomes and less dependence on social services.
(Garcia, Heckman, Leaf, Prados, 2016)

Who is Raising Literacy Australia Inc?

Raising Literacy Australia is a not for profit organisation committed to enriching Australian lives through literacy. Through universal and targeted programs, we encourage families to **read, sing, talk** and **play** with their children from birth by providing books and resources that nurture young children's development and information for parents to encourage effective engagement with their child's learning.

Our vision

To enrich Australian lives through literacy and to ensure that individuals are treated equally, with respect, and are supported in their pathways to social inclusion and lifelong learning.

Our mission

To build sustainable, high quality and accessible programs which educate and encourage individuals, families and the broader community. The outcome is to support effective change in programs and practices enabling Australians to pursue lifelong learning, thus improving their life chances, including the ability to participate in society.

Our priorities

1 Advocacy

To raise national awareness of the crucial importance of literacy and its role in our everyday lives.

2 Partnerships

Work with likeminded organisations, individuals and governments. Celebrate, support and promote good practices.

3 Programs

To evaluate and grow our programs to enable positive practices and effective engagement among individuals, families and communities.

4 Knowledge

To provide opportunities that educate, inform, upskill and inspire through sharing of information and the delivery of the Building Foundations of Early Learning (BFEL) program.

A message from our Chair, Carolyn Mitchell

A remarkable expansion of new knowledge about brain development in the early years of life is giving us deeper insights into how early experiences are built into our bodies, with lasting impacts on learning, behaviour, and both physical and mental health. These insights can be used to fuel new ideas that capitalise on the promise of the early years and lead to breakthrough solutions to some of the most complex challenges facing parents, communities, and nations.

(Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016).

In 2018, the Board and organisation have worked diligently to progress its mission of raising awareness of the importance of literacy in our everyday lives. Our continued partnerships with Child and Family Health Service, Department for Education, SA Health and Department for Child Protection help to support the organisation to reach its goals of providing resources, information and guidance to families with young children.

As any Board recognises, the main functions are to steer the organisation strategically and financially. The Board has continued to support management in its strategic direction, continued implementation of the fundraising plan and strengthening the business of The Little Book Press.

This year we have farewelled Nick Linke from our board and Paul Lecher stepped down from the Chair role. I would like to personally thank both Nick and Paul for their excellent service on the Board and their continued support of the board and the organisation as a whole.

We have also welcomed three new board members; Ruth Blenkiron, Devita Pathi and Paula Davies, significantly strengthening our governance and education skill sets.

We are fortunate to have the support of our state government with funding to deliver the Little Big Book Club Reading Pack and Read to Me projects. SA Health provided funds to support food literacy resources for the preschool reading packs. *Variety SA* and *Cochrane's* provide valuable in-kind support and grant funding for the Read to Me project and the *Carthew Foundation* has committed to the organisation for three years with funding to support the development of new resources.

The organisation also continued to work with State Library of Victoria to roll out seminars and training workshops for public libraries of Victoria on early childhood brain development and the implementation of effective library programs supporting early childhood literacy.

I wish to take this opportunity on behalf of the RLA Board and team to once again thank our two founding partners, Advertiser Newspapers Pty Ltd and the government of South Australia, in particular the Department for Education, Department of Child Protection SA and SA Health who continue to strongly back the organisation through significant in-kind and financial support.

None of this would be possible without the work of our magnificent team. The Board wishes to formally recognise and thank each member of the team for their tireless and always enthusiastic efforts.

Carolyn Mitchell
Chair,



A message from our CEO, Sue Hill

When we started in South Australia in 2002 our aims were to nurture the community's reading habits, to provide quality book recommendations and to challenge readers to explore genres and titles. This was the start of the Big Book Club, a state-wide initiative that featured a different adult title each month and promoted book and author across the state.

Research released in early 2000 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicated that only four out of ten families were reading with their children on a regular basis. We felt a responsibility to not only share this information but to understand the barriers that were stopping families reading with their children and to offer solutions.

In 2005, we launched The Little Big Book Club program targeting families with very young children, early childhood practitioners, governments and other likeminded organisations. In 2015, we expanded LBBC with the addition of toddler and preschool reading packs.

In 2018, we delivered with the substantial help of stakeholders, over 65,000 FREE reading packs to South Australian families. The packs are multifunctional in their purpose by encouraging parental bonding and engagement with their baby right from the start, underpinning foundational literacy and numeracy, introducing STEM to families with toddlers and preschoolers and by providing opportunities through play-based activities and stories for children to learn and understand resilience, friendships and self-regulation.

Early in 2018, a new team member, Janet Leske, Director of Community Programs and I attended the Australian Early Development Census three-day conference in Melbourne. The conference brought together over 300 practitioners, researchers and policy makers across education, child protection, health and community services for a valuable three days of thought-provoking discussion. Taking part in the conference enabled us to strengthen our connection with other national and international practitioners. The conference provided valuable insights into current national statistics, particularly those relating to vulnerable families with young children, and showed how working together can achieve effective outcomes for all families.

To this end, the team has strived to work more closely with affiliated programs and collective impact initiatives including Strong Start, CFARNS (Child and Family Referral Network Services), Save the Children – Play2Learn program, Together in South and Mid Murray Family Connections Collective, as well as Department for Education Parenting and Children's Centres, Good Start Centres, Catholic Education Preschool and Playgroup programs and Child and Family Health.

I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Peter Cochrane and his wonderful staff. Cochrane's go above and beyond in its efforts to help, through supporting the Little Big Book Club reading pack program with the storing and couriering of our 65,000 Reading packs over the course of the year and the storing and packing of our start-up-library packs for children in out-of-home care. Nothing is too hard for the team at Cochrane's: always helpful, always courteous, always friendly and always onto it.

Lastly, we couldn't do what we do without the ongoing support of the state government of South Australia, Advertiser Newspapers, Variety SA, the Children's Charity, Carthew Foundation, Department for Education, Department for Child Protection, SA Health and Child and Family Services.

Sussan Hill
Chief Executive Officer

5,000 +
new books
DONATED
to community
organisations

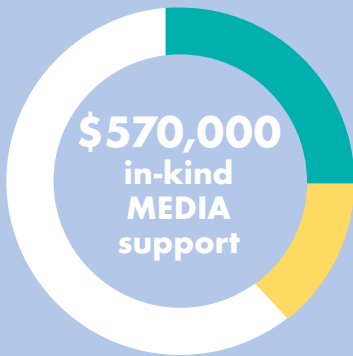


\$20,000
in-kind
STORAGE



2500 volunteer hours
\$75,000 VALUE

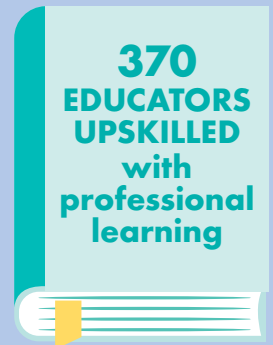
\$570,000
in-kind
MEDIA
support



A total of
400,000
resources in
65,000
reading packs



370
EDUCATORS
UPSKILLED
with
professional
learning



preschools

TALKING

families

literacy

children

prevention

READING

early education

foster care

relationships

community

books

support

STEM

SINGING

PLAYING

cultural
diversity

foster care

professional
learning

2017
2018

Partners, funders and stakeholders

We are fortunate to work with a diverse range of organisations. To achieve outcomes for families we must continue to strive to work collectively with governments, not for profits and organisations who work with families and their children.



Founding Partners

Government of South Australia
Advertiser Newspapers Pty Ltd

Program Partners

Department for Education
Department for Education Distribution Centre
Department for Child Protection
SA Health
Variety SA - the children's charity
Carthew Foundation
Cochrane's
Booktopia
Channel 7
5AA
Nova 919
Origin Foundation

Supporters

Child and Family Health Services
Department for Education
Strong Start
Child and Family Assessment Referral Network
Helen Mayo House
Lyell McEwin Hospital
Flinders Medical Centre
Women's and Children's Hospital
CentaCare
Goodstart Early Learning
Learning Together program
Anglicare
Together SA – South
Mid Murray Family Connections
Save the Children – Play2Learn
Affirm Press
Allen and Unwin
Berbay Publishing
Fremantle Press
Hachette Australia
Hardie Grant Egmont Australia
HarperCollins Australia
Magabala Books
New Frontier Publishing
Penguin Random House
Scholastic Australia
Simon and Schuster Australia
Walker Books Australia

Fundraising in focus

Fundraising is an essential and on-going challenge. With over 56,000 registered charities operating across Australia, it is vital that Raising Literacy Australia's mission to support vulnerable children and families stands out from the crowd.

12.3 million Australians or 61% of the population donated to charity more than once in 2018. However, there is currently a downward trend in giving, putting even more pressure on charities to acquire and retain donors.

To support the organisation's fundraising strategy, three team members attended a specialised mentoring program, led by not-for-profit expert, Bobbie Brown. The team refreshed their knowledge of fundraising principles, workshopped and tested new ideas, and evaluated the success of past campaigns. Post-mentoring, RLA's mid-year fundraising campaign achieved its best results to date and engagement with existing and prospective donors has improved greatly. RLA has also established a new CRM platform to manage day-to-day fundraising tasks and campaigns, providing a more effective and efficient way to fundraise.

Over the past 12 months RLA has been developing a bequest program and has spoken with many supporters about their views and priorities. In these conversations, many have shared their preference for a "Living Will" as opposed to a traditional bequest, to allow them to see the impact of their financial contribution realised in the present day. RLA has a range of options to support Living Wills and Bequests, including in-memory giving where donors can gift a children's library in the name of their loved one to a socially disadvantaged community.

In the area of governance, the RLA Public Fund Sub-Committee met quarterly in the 2017/2018 financial year to provide advice on the fundraising strategy and funds management for the Public Fund. In April 2018, the committee endorsed the decision to streamline donation options, electing to use GiveNow as the principal donation method for one-off gifts, regular monthly gifts and in-memory giving. The GiveNow platform offers the lowest transaction fees in Australia and ensures that funds are processed economically to maximise donor contributions. RLA would like to thank committee members, John Irving (Chair), Matthew Holden (Treasurer) and Evelyn Johns for their ongoing commitment and support of the Public Fund.



Little Book Press Publishing House

In July 2017, we officially launched the *Little Book Press Publishing House*. Using the experience gained over the last ten years, we are forging ahead with the development of resources for national and international audiences and the LBBC SA Reading program.

The development of a picture book can take between 12 and 24 months from the selection of a manuscript, matching and engaging an illustrator to bring the story to life, and then finally to designing and printing the finished work.

We work closely with Australian authors and illustrators, both emerging and established, to produce fabulous picture and board books, activity books, *Look with Me Discovery* non-fiction books, nursery rhyme books and CDs and parental information books that support children's learning and development.

In 2017 one of our titles was a notable in the *Children's Book Council Awards*, *Little Chicken Chickabee* by Janeen Brian and Danny Snell.

In 2018, three of our books were notables: *Baby Dance* by Katrina Germein and Doris Chang and *Fancy Pants* by Kelly Hibbert and Amanda Graham were shortlisted for the *Australian Speech Pathology Awards*.

In 2018, three of our titles were notable in Children's Book Council Awards

Jump and Shout by Mike Dumbleton and Peter Carnavas

Wilbur, Grace and Joe by Phil Cummings and Amanda Graham

Busy Little Creatures by RLA team and Fiona Bowden

In 2018, *Busy Little Creatures* and *Jump and Shout* have been shortlisted in the *Book of the Year Speech Pathology Australia Awards*.

With the help of Natasha Solomun, Foreign Rights Consultant we have sold the rights of *Little Chicken Chickabee* into Japan for five years and have printed 2,000 additional copies of *Jump and Shout* as a co-edition with New Frontier, United Kingdom. We also have representation at the Shanghai, Beijing and Frankfurt 2018 book fairs.

Five new titles were sent off to the printers in June 2018 and will land in Australia mid-October 2018. These titles will be available widely across Australia through Booktopia and participating booksellers. The titles will also be included in the South Australian 2019 Baby and Toddler Reading packs. Titles include: *Let's Go Strolling* by Katrina Germein and Danny Snell, *Hush say the Stars* by Margaret Spurling and Mandy Foot, *Garden Stew* by Carrie Gallasch and Zoe Ingram (first time author and illustrator) and *I Spy Food* by RLA team.

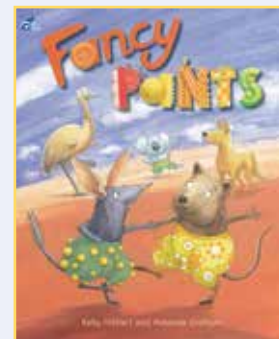
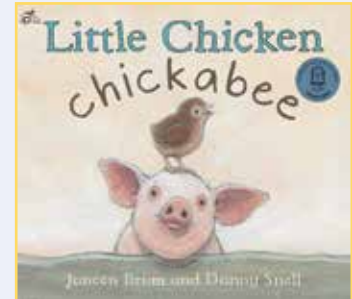
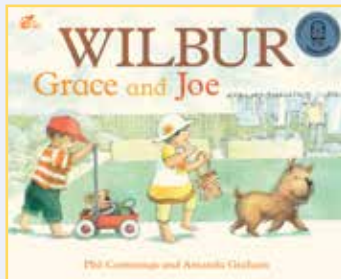
An additional five titles are under development for release in the marketplace in 2020 and 2021.

To support the undertakings of Little Book Press we launched a dedicated website and Facebook page that are overseen by Neil McGrory, our IT guru. Both sites continue to grow with a number of booksellers, library suppliers, libraries, educational suppliers and individuals using the website to purchase our titles.

Find us on Facebook

 **@lbpress**

Award winning books



New books





Programs

Raising Literacy Australia has a long history of providing multi-faceted programs for the early childhood practitioners, families with children aged birth to five years and a targeted program for children in out-of-home care. The programs are to encourage, support and underpin best practices in early childhood settings and to support rich home learning environments.

Our key programs and projects are:

- **The Little Big Book Club (LBBC)** – an early childhood reading development initiative supporting families with children birth to five years of age and the early childhood sector
- **Read to Me** – a project supporting children in out-of-home care
- **Building Foundations for Early Learning (BFEL)** – a professional development training package for the early childhood sector which teaches the importance of everyday literacy and how programs can fundamentally impact the wellbeing, lifelong learning and social inclusion of families
- **Community Libraries** – a project providing families in vulnerable areas with access to high quality picture and board books.

The Little Big Book Club

Reading Packs

Every year we assess and then further develop the content that makes up the SA FREE Reading packs. We want to make sure that families are bowled over by the attractiveness of the resources in the packs and are encouraged to share them with their children.

The aim of the packs is to:

- help families with a new born baby establish that all-important bond between parent and child and begin a reading routine with their baby right from the start
- support families with a toddler to continue to read, with the focus on foundational literacy and numeracy development for their child using the carefully designed toddler picture and activity books
- provide appropriate resources for children entering preschool with the emphasis on friendships, differences, problem solving, emotions and introducing STEM and how it relates to play-based activities and a child's learning environment.



In 2017 and 2018 we distributed the reading packs to a large number of organisations including:

Child and Family Health Clinics and the Home Visiting program
Lyell McEwin Hospital – Mothercarer program
Women’s & Children’s Hospital – Neonatal Unit
Flinders Medical Centre – Neonatal Unit
Anglicare
Centacare Catholic Family Services
Goodstart
Mission SA
Catholic Education Preschools
Catholic Education – Supported Playgroups
Dept Education – Learning Together program
Dept Education Parenting & Children’s Centres
Dept Education Preschools
Save the Children
RICE
Metropolitan Youth Health
Relationship Australia
Point Pearce Playcentre
Point Pearce Aboriginal Community SA.
Port Neill Playcentre
Minya Porlar Creche Anglicare
Corny Point Playcentre
Booborowie Playcentre
Blanchetown Playcentre
Auburn Playcentre
Blanchetown Playcentre

Booborowie Playcentre
Hallett/Mt Bryan Playcentre
Cadell Playcentre
Arno Bay Playcentre
Darke Peak Playcentre
GP Plus Modbury
Karkoo Playcentre
Langhorne Creek Playcentre
Milang Playcentre
Edithburgh Playcentre
Evanston Gardens Playcentre
Farrell Flat Playcentre
Frances Playcentre
Melrose Playcentre
Moorook Playcentre
Myponga Playcentre
Owen Playcentre
Point Pearce Playcentre
Port Neill Playcentre
Snowtown Playcentre
Spalding Playcentre
Stansbury Playcentre
Tantanoola Playcentre
Truro Playcentre
Ungarra Playcentre
Corny Point Playcentre
Marion Bay Playcentre
Wasleys Playcentre
United Care Wesley

Feedback from a Mum on receipt of 2018 LBBC Baby Reading pack



I just wanted to express my gratitude to the generosity of the Little Big Book Club. When I received my baby’s bag from our CaFHS nurse on our home visit after hospital, I was overwhelmed by the gift. Very emotional!! It had been a difficult birth and first few weeks for us and the bag and beautiful books donated were a beautiful reminder of things that are important.

My son and I look at the books and read together, which has been a wonderful bonding experience for us. The books are beautifully illustrated and written,

with the contrast and large pictures engaging my baby in. I have not come across many books suitable for babies, but all books we were given were perfect.

What a great program!! Thank you very much. I hope these programs continue and are funded and supported for a long time. Literacy is so important, and we are so fortunate to be in a place where we have access to such high-quality resources for babies, toddlers and children. Your website is fabulous!

Thank you for bringing the joy of books and reading into my son’s life and for the generosity that helped me through a tough adjustment to motherhood.



Over 1000+ sites distributed reading packs to families in 2018



From Netley to...

Aberfoyle Park, Adelaide, Aldinga, Andamooka, Angle Park, Angaston, Ardrossan, Balaklava, Barossa, Barmera, Berri, Blackwood, Bordertown, Bowden, Brighton, Burnside, Burra, Campbelltown, Cambrai, Ceduna, Central Yorke Peninsula, Clare, Cleve, Coober Pedy, Coomandook, Cowandilla, Cowell, Crystal Brook, Cummins, East Murray, Elizabeth, Elizabeth Grove, Elizabeth Vale, Enfield, Eudunda, Evanston Gardens, Findon, Fullarton, Gawler, Gawler East, Gilberton, Gladstone, Glenelg, Glenside, Goodwood, Goolwa, Greenacres, Gumeracha, Hackham West, Hallet Cove, Hawker, Hawthorn, Henley Beach, Hilton, Hindmarsh, Ingle Farm, Jamestown, Kadina, Kapunda, Karcultaby, Karoonda, Keith, Kimba, Kingscote, Kingston SE, Lamerloo, Largs Bay, Leigh Creek, Lock, Loxton, Lucindale, Lyndoch, Maitland, Mannum, Marion, Mawson Lakes, Meningie, Millicent, Mimili Anangu School, Mindarie, Minlaton, Mitcham, Modbury, Moonta, Mt Barker, Mt Compass, Mt Gambier, Mt Pleasant, Murray Bridge, Nailsworth, Naracoorte, Newton, Noarlunga, North Adelaide, Norwood, Nuriootpa, Orroroo, O'Sullivan Beach, Paradise, Parafield Gardens, Para Hills, Parkholme, Paruna, Penola, Peterborough, Payneham, Pinnaroo, Pt Adelaide, Pt Elliot, Prospect, Pt Augusta, Pt Broughton, Pt Lincoln, Pt MacDonnell, Pt Pirie, Quorn, Renmark, Riverton, Robe, Roxby Downs, Saddleworth, Salisbury West, Seaford, Seaton, Semaphore, Snowtown, South Plympton, Stirling, Strathalbyn, Streaky Bay, Swan Reach, Tailem Bend, Tanunda, Taperoo, Tea Tree Gully, Tintinara, Torrens, Trinity Gardens, Tumby Bay, Two Wells, Unley, Victor Harbor, Waikerie, Walkerville, Wallaroo, West Lakes, West Torrens, Whyalla, Willunga, Woodcroft, Woodside, Woodville, Woomera, Wudinna, Wynn Vale, Yankalilla and Yorketown.



Social Media

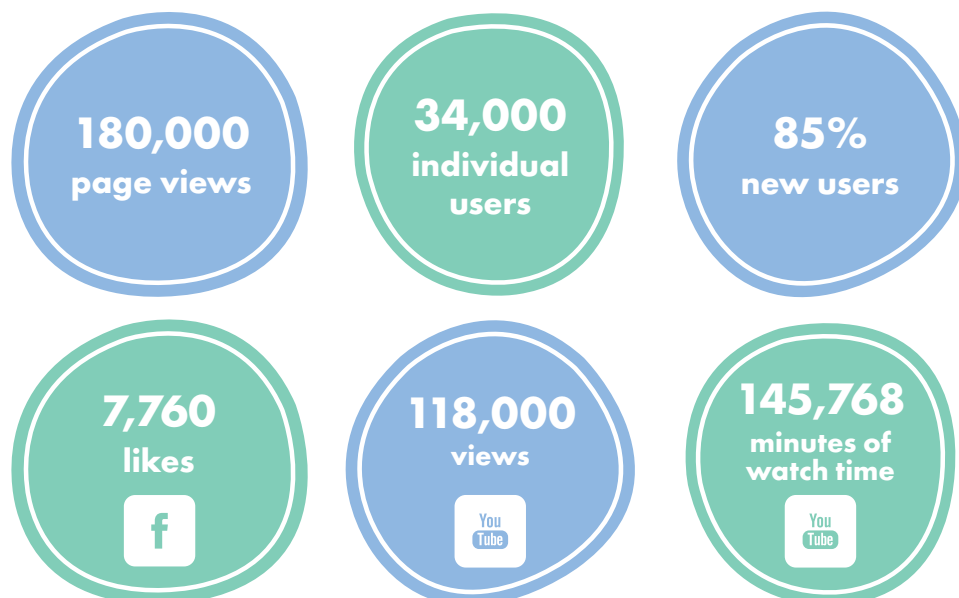
- Website <http://www.thelittlebigbookclub.com.au>
- Twitter: @littlebookclub1
- Facebook: @The Little Big Book Club
- Instagram: @thelittlebigbookclub
- Pinterest: <https://au.pinterest.com/littlebigbook>

Little Big Book Club – YouTube

It has been a big year for the LBBC YouTube channel passing the milestone of 100,000 views earlier in the year. Views have continued to grow strongly in the first quarter of 2018 with over 10,000 views and peaking at close to 300 views in a single day.

To further promote and encourage viewing on LBBC YouTube Channel we are now posting regular content updates to give the channel a more 'live' feel. This appears to be working after passing 100,000 minutes viewed at the beginning of October 2017, watch time minutes are currently sitting at 145,768 – close to 50 percent growth in the space of one year and peaking just over 600 minutes viewed in a day.

LBBC website



Read to Me

Research tells us that healthy brain development forms the foundation for all future learning. It is not uncommon for children who are living in out-of-home care to have been subjected to adverse experiences such as exposure to trauma, abuse and neglect. As experiences lay the pathway for strong healthy brain development the *Read to Me* project aims to support children from birth to six years of age and their care families by providing literacy-rich resources and information enabling positive engagement and experiences between the care adult and child.


Project components


- A start up library of ten picture and board books, age-appropriate are posted direct to every child in Out-of-Home Care aged birth to six years of age
- Every quarter an additional three board or picture books are posted direct to every child in Out-of-Home Care
- Play adjuncts – board games, tummy time cards, matching cards and activity time sheets accompany the picture and board books

The collaboration with Department for Child Protection and Department for Education Distribution Centre is key to the success of the delivery process allowing children to directly receive their Read to Me libraries. Variety SA and Cochrane's continue to support the project through significant grant and in-kind funding which helps to underpin the acquisition, storing and collating of the start-up and quarterly libraries.

Furthermore, the Australian publishing industry provides valuable assistance in the acquisition of titles which are carefully selected to match the children's ages and personal circumstances at a much-reduced cost.

Feedback from SA Carer

 *Thank you for your contribution to our foster child's education and development. Since he came into my care at 14 months I have read to him every day and he has loved it fiercely. Six months on and he still loves books and reading along with singing songs, playing musical instruments, dancing, pretend play, and other artistic activities. Books have become a huge part of his everyday life – he has stories before bed, books for car-rides both long and short, and I often receive feedback that he loves the books and Storytime at childcare.*

The books you sent are much appreciated as we didn't have any of them and we will cherish them for as long as our foster child has love for them before we send them forward for another child to appreciate and learn from. 

Featured Stories project

Families continue to tell us that one of the barriers to reading with their child is not knowing what to read, when to read, what is age appropriate and the best time and ways to read. To help families overcome these barriers we have, since 2006, operated the Featured Stories project. Every month we review and recommended a board or picture book for babies, a picture or board book for toddlers and a picture book or first novel for preschool children.

We have over 500 stories featured on our *The Little Big Book Club* website. Each story we select is accompanied by an activity time sheet and a learning time sheet. These supporting educational time sheets help both families and the early childhood workforce to use stories in their home and workplace settings. We want stories to go beyond reading and into play-based activities in and around the home and into every workplace setting that has young children, whether that be a day care centre, library, preschool or playgroup.

Access to our featured stories is as follows:

Since 2006, News Corp has been instrumental in communicating across South Australia, every month our selections of featured stories.

Monthly advertisements are featured across the weekdays and weekends in the Advertiser, Sunday Mail and Messenger Newspapers. The in-kind editorial and advertising support from News Corp is valued over \$500,000 throughout the 2017/18 financial year.

Sample of play based Activity Sheet – Featured Stories Program

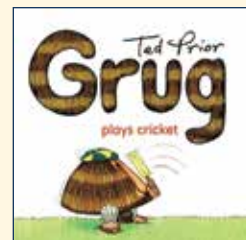


STEM | Science Technology **Engineering Maths**

PLAY – GRUG PLAYS CRICKET

Author and Illustrator, Ted Prior.

Learn to play cricket just like Grug... mark the field, get the stumps, roll the ball and **HIT!** Games with numbers and counting are a great way to build simple maths activities into your daily play routine. Play backyard cricket and see how many hits you and your child make together, tally them up. Show your child how you can record numbers in different ways, for example writing the numbers, 1,2,3 or lines I, II, III or even dots!



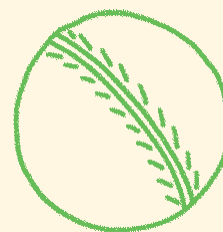
Backyard cricket

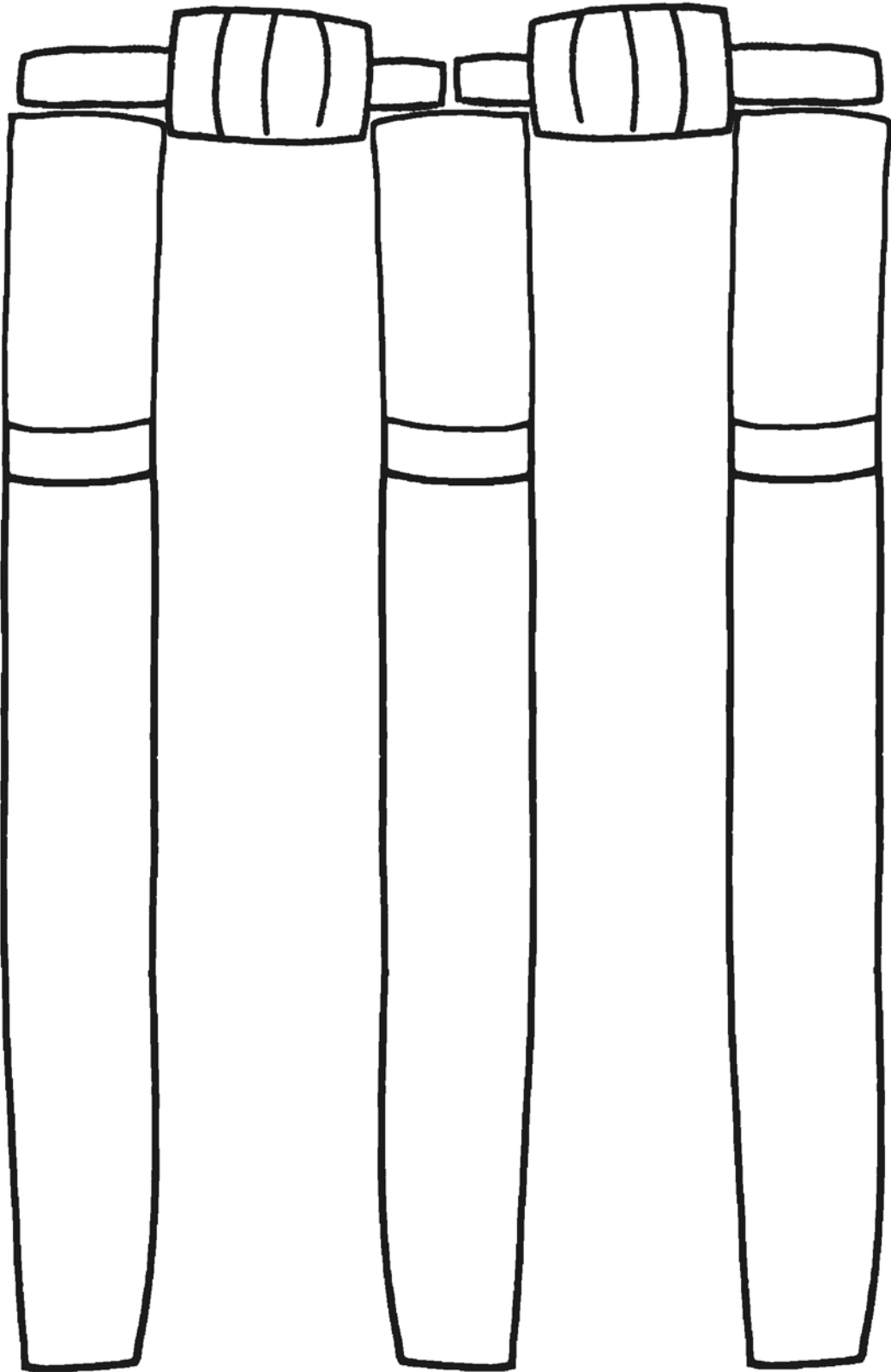
You will need:

- Cricket Stumps template
- Crayons
- Sticky tape
- Scissors optional
- Your own bat, or cardboard roll and strong cardboard
- Your own ball, or scrunched alfoil ball.

What to do:

1. Colour and cut out template.
2. Choose a place to play. Sticky tape your stumps to a wall, wheelie bin, tree or large box.
3. If you are making your own bat and ball, use heavy cardboard as the face of the bat and a cardboard roll (from wrapping paper or paper towel) as the handle. You can also roll newspaper and secure with tape to make a bat.
4. Mark out your cricket pitch and play!
5. Gently roll the ball and practise hitting with your bat.





Building Foundations for Early Learning

Building Foundations for Early Learning is our professional development training package which is offered to organisations nationally and internationally who operate family-based programs or organisations and services wanting to establish literacy rich programs for families with young children.

In early 2018, the RLA team delivered an additional seven specialised workshops across Victoria.

This newly developed Specialised Workshop examines the challenges and barriers some of the children and families in our communities experience, and how we can support their additional needs in our early childhood programming.

Three topics covered:

Culturally diverse

How we can support young children with limited English language skills to be a part of story time and play time sessions and build their confidence, vocabulary and social skills.

Children with additional needs

How we can be more welcoming for children who have special needs (eg, deafness, autism, etc) and provide fun and engaging opportunities to learn in a story time and play based learning program.

Community outreach

Some families have no interest in coming to community service, programs or the library – how do we reach these children/families and provide resources and services that truly engage them?

Letter of endorsement

Robyn Ellard, Senior Program Manager,
Public Libraries and Community Engagement,
State Library Victoria



I am very pleased to endorse and recommend Raising Literacy Australia to you. In 2016 we engaged Raising Literacy Australia (through a competitive process) to develop a one-day early years literacy workshop and deliver it to over 400 public library and State Library Victoria staff in 14 locations across Victoria.

We required Raising Literacy Australia to develop an early years training program that aligned with, and reinforced, the standards set for the sector in Reading and literacy for all: quality indicators for early years

literacy programs in Victorian public libraries and tailored to the Victorian public library sector. Through consultations with members of my team, and staff from State Library Victoria and public libraries, they developed a program that was so well received that we organised additional sessions to meet the demand.

Having experienced and witnessed the way Raising Literacy Australia works with their clients, develops their training programs (embedded in early years best practice) and delivers their programs in a fun, engaging and meaningful way, I have no hesitation in recommending Raising Literacy Australia.



We received very positive feedback about the training and the presenters, including:

“One of the most engaging and informative sessions I’ve been to EVER. The presenters obviously loved their topics and their job. The pacing, inclusiveness, personal case studies were fantastic.”

“Very reassuring to realise that we’re doing a great job with sometimes limited time and resources and to learn more about the theory behind what we’re doing.”

Following on from the highly successful professional development program in 2016, we re-engaged Raising Literacy Australia in 2017 to develop further training for Victorian public libraries (again underpinned by our Early Years Literacy Quality Indicators) focusing on providing early years literacy support too hard to reach and disadvantaged families, culturally diverse communities and families with special needs.

Once again, we received very positive feedback about the training and the presenters, including:

“This was one of the best PDs I have attended. I would recommend this to everyone.”

“Training from Raising Literacy Australia is always the highest quality and most valuable training to attend.”

The information is always up to date and in depth but presented in a way that’s easy to digest by passionate presenters. Their attention to detail and consideration of different types of learners is unique and highly appreciated by those who can’t sit and listen all day.”

“It was a fantastic, positive environment. Thank you for putting the program together. I hope I do the training justice.”

What's next for BFEL

Over the course of 2017/18 RLA received numerous requests to provide the BFEL professional learning training package online. Midway through 2018, Julia Jones joined the RLA team to support Belinda Spry, Director of Training, in researching and developing a multi-faceted online training program that will reinforce the early years and best practice programs whilst also updating families on their child's early years.

We hope to have a functioning, effective and practical online learning program active in early 2019.

Community Libraries

The aim of this project is to establish picture book libraries in communities that have limited access to books and early literacy resources.

Over the course of three years RLA Inc has provided community libraries, predominantly across South Australia. We want to provide families who don't frequent public libraries, with an opportunity to access to an abundance of quality picture and board books through alternative centres and programs that they frequent.

In 2018, Jane Lemon, an early childhood consultant interviewed four Department for Education Parenting and Children's Centres, who had received an RLA Community Library.

Findings

This section draws together the results of our investigation.

All of the three Centres that had been using the libraries for a significant period of time had deeply embedded the resource into the programs that they run, including differing varieties of playgroup, occasional care and parenting programs. They had high levels of borrowing and innovative ways to encourage it, like the reading vine and using group books and focus books.

All four Centres have people with great enthusiasm for books managing the library, with at least two quoting slabs of books that they love. They were very familiar with the contents of the libraries and excited about growing a love of reading in the families and children they work with.

All five people who were interviewed had similar ideas on what they thought might support them further. They were all keen on having a resource folder to support the library and extend the way they use the books and incorporate explicit messages into their groups.

It is clear that in most centres the primary focus is on community programs and children aged birth to prior to preschool. This is partly a function of the layout of Centres and the location of the library, but also because preschool children have other opportunities to borrow books, either through the preschool or school libraries. This has implications for the type of books that are most suitable to be included in the libraries, with one Centre explicitly asking for more board books.

Another recurrent theme was the urgent need for dual language books. Some have purchased such books but they are expensive and difficult to source. All Centres employ a wide range of cultures and languages in them and many have grandparents with minimal English engaged in groups with children, so the need is high.

All Centres offer a range of parenting programs and have individual relationships with families which lead to supporting them through common problems, including sleeping, eating, and parenting. They all mentioned that developing a selection of books on these topics that could be shared with families along with Parent Easy Guides or other adult focussed materials would be useful.

All Centres suggested that books focussing on fathers would be valuable for them, especially those that depicted fathers in everyday caring situations. This could have a twofold effect: engaging dads in reading and also providing a model of the way fathers in Australia undertake parenting.

All Centres were enthusiastic about a Tip of the Week resource, possibly including posters and small tear off sheets for families. They felt that short easy to understand messages could be incorporated throughout their sessions as well as directly at the libraries. They were also enthusiastic about a way to encourage families to extend the reading into other areas of talking, singing and playing and thought information to do this could be attached to some of the books.

It is clear that community libraries are enormously valuable, and they should be supported and extended as much as possible.

Use it or lose it!

The importance of play and interaction

Babies' brains are a work in progress. They are all similar at birth, but it is early experiences, both positive and negative, that impact on how they develop. A baby is born with most of their neurons formed; however, they are not yet connected. Positive experiences are required to form and reinforce these necessary connections for the best possible brain development. Positive experiences are nurturing, warm, consistent and predictable.

The brain will not develop unless it has appropriate stimulation. Experiences that use the five senses help build the necessary connections for optimal brain development (Cynader and Mustard, 1998). Each time a child uses one of their senses, a neural connection is made. When new experiences are repeated the connections are strengthened, impacting on how the child learns now and, in the future, (Brotherson, 2005).

During the first 3 years of life, children experience the world in a more complete way than children of any other age. The brain takes in the external world through its system of sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. This means that infant social, emotional, cognitive, physical and language development are stimulated during multisensory experiences. Infants and toddlers need the opportunity to participate in a world filled with stimulating sights, sounds and people (Gable and Hunting, 2001).

Play, more than any other activity, promotes healthy development of children. All learning (emotional, social, motor and cognitive) is accelerated by play (Perry et al., 2000).

Children are active, not passive learners. They gain knowledge by exploring their surroundings in meaningful ways. The most powerful way young children learn is through play. Play allows and encourages children to be engaged. Through play children are able to be curious, to imagine, pretend, create, talk, problem solve, negotiate, cooperate, reason and explain (Perry et al., 2000). The repetitive nature of play helps shape and build the important networks in children's brains (Bergen, 2002).

Research has shown that children whose parents read to them when they are young learn to speak, read and write more easily. It is never too early to start reading to babies. Even though they may not understand the words that you read to them, they love hearing the sound of your voice and they learn that reading is important and fun.

Picture books can provide opportunities to stimulate meaningful and necessary play experiences for children. Activities that let children talk about and represent their ideas through music, movement, art and craft activities and imaginative play all help to develop important neural connections.

Children learn best when they have exposure to rich language, hands-on experiences and the chance to repeat activities. Nursery rhymes and songs with actions are an effective way to engage children of all ages. Babies will join in with the actions even before they can talk. The rhyme and repetition make them fun and simple for children to learn.

Our message to families is to read, sing, talk and play every day with your children. To support these messages and encourage families to actively engage with their children we provide guidance on what books to read, how to extend stories shared into play based activities, what songs to sing, that go with the story and what activities you can do with every day objects in and around the home. We provide these messages in our reading packs, in our educational learning and activity time sheets, through our social media postings and through traditional print media with the help of News Corporation.



What it is to be a children's writer by Mike Dumbleton

I wanted to be a writer in my late teens but wanting to be a writer was the easy bit. Life became too busy. Travel, sport and three children delayed me for about twenty years!

I eventually found some time when the children were teenagers and didn't need (or want) me around all the time.

The first thing I had to learn was how to begin work instantly in the short gaps and spaces between full time teaching and family commitments. Subsequently, I always kept my work close at hand and systematically put it in the car when travelling anywhere in case the car broke down and I had to wait for the RAA! I also eliminated delaying habits such as getting a drink, arranging equipment or checking the mail first. I made the time appropriate for writing, rather than waiting for an appropriate time. I also set the alarm earlier on weekdays so that I could write before leaving for school.

I soon had some rejections and dents in my self-belief. But several rejections were what I called 'good' rejections because they included a handwritten note from the publisher saying things like "We'd like to see more of your work". It was one of those publishers who finally accepted a manuscript.

I'll never forget the acceptance phone call for my first book, *Dial-a-Croc*. I couldn't believe I was hearing phrases like, "loved your manuscript" and "offer you a contract". It was a dream come true. Then it got even better. The rights were sold for the UK and the USA.

But now I had the fear of being a 'one book wonder'. I couldn't do much about that, except to continue writing with my fingers crossed, but I did do one other thing. I made sure that everyone in my family had their name in the book, in case it never happened again. I slipped my wife's name into the author information, and I included the names of our three sons in the dedication.

Luckily, there were more books to follow, however, like most writers I've experienced the occasional dry spell and wondered if my writing career had come to an end. This is not helped when someone asks the dreaded 'pipeline' question. "So what's in the pipeline now?" "Is there something in the pipeline?" Sadly, sometimes the only thing in the pipeline is the light at the end. Then I have to mumble something vague about working on new

ideas, while desperately wishing I had a blockage in the form of a prospective publication!

I soon discovered that persistence was a key quality for a writer. Persistence when the writing is not working. Persistence responding to critical feedback. Persistence working on endless refinements. It is that persistence which leads to publication and the many accompanying rewards.

The rewards have been both public and personal. Public rewards have included award winning books, newspaper articles and school visits as an author. Private rewards have included being able to dedicate books to family members, relatives and friends. It also includes having original illustrations on display at home from several of my illustrators. Another personal reward is simply the opportunity to work with editors, illustrators and designers to create the published book. Producing picture books is a truly collaborative activity. My words on blank pages are just the beginning.

I continue to write children's books because I enjoy creating stories and playing with language to produce different results, sometimes riotous and sometimes more sensitive. At the moment I'm working on several new ideas. As usual, one idea has barely started and another has stalled after a promising start. So, what's happens next? What's that on the horizon ahead of me?

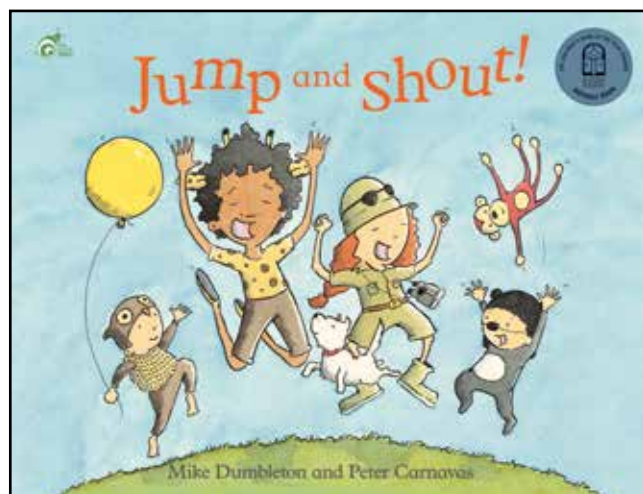
Is it a bird?

Is it a plane?

No, it's persistence!

And I'm going to need it, yet again, if I want another manuscript to really take off and fly.

Mike Dumbleton





What it is to be an Illustrator by Mandy Foot

Illustrating *Hush Say the Stars* for Little Book Press

When first asked if I would like to illustrate *Hush Say the Stars*, penned by Margaret Spurling, I really didn't need to know any more. I have long been a fan of Margaret Spurling's writing so I took it as quite an honour. To then discover it was set on a farm, resembling the tones of a classic lullaby, it couldn't be more perfect.

Farm animals are right up there on my list of favourite things to draw. Living on acres in the Adelaide Hills we have quite the menagerie for inspiration. The cows in the story are from our herd. The brown and white one in front sitting closest is named Petal – even though they are not pets, she loves a pat and scratch ever since we saved her life many years ago when she was unable to walk for a week. Nursing her back to health she is now a favourite and I think she knows how much we helped her – that is her calf gazing towards the stars.

I have also drawn our cat into the story, *Maow Maow*, sitting on my grandmother's library chair. It was reupholstered decades ago with a beautiful image of a dancing couple. The embroidery is exquisite, remarkably detailed, so I have simply drawn a representation of it. The dog is my red and white Border Collie, Arty (ironic I know – when I learnt the breeder had named him Art, that was it, the decision was made, he was coming home with me).

With any book I illustrate, I am always looking for inspiration – what can I add in? What detail can I put

in to give this farm a warm, magical feeling? And I find it everywhere. My brain never seems to shut off. I'll drive past a letterbox or a fence and think wow, that would be a great addition. So, I'll photograph it or draw it straight away before I forget. The idea for the plasma cut shovel came from a good friend of mine who creates these, each by hand with meticulous care. They look so intimate and it seemed such a beautiful way to display the delicacy of the butterflies resting on the Moonflower vine.

From the minute I read the text I really wanted to bring a subtle magic to the illustrations. Watercolour as the medium was my first and obvious choice with the addition of loose pencil line-work to give it spontaneity and a carefree life of its own. When blending watercolour paints you can never be really certain what you are going to get so that is like creating magic in itself. I incorporated the bunny both as the child's favourite toy (with the embroidered star in the ear) and as a real character who travels through the story with the reader. If you look closely you can even see a rabbit constellation on several pages – this idea came after my son had visited the Planetarium for the day and was fascinated by what he could find in the stars that night – perfect timing I know! Inspiration can hit when you least expect it.

I really like to add that story within the story – in this case the rabbit, the constellation. It's something within the illustrations that is never mentioned in the text, but it adds depth; it's for the reader, particularly children, to discover and make that experience of reading a book an even more magical one.

Mandy Foot



2018 Annual Treasurer's Report

I present the audited 2018 financial statements to the Board.

Profit and loss

	2018	2017
Sales Revenue	253,948	339,828
Other revenue	831,861	863,568
Total Income	1,085,809	1,203,396
Cost of sales	(131,678)	(136,262)
Depreciation	(5,952)	(3,059)
Project Costs	(458,762)	(518,114)
Employee benefits	(318,177)	(251,523)
Occupancy expense	(80,076)	(64,640)
Advertising expense	(16,473)	(17,954)
Administration expenses	(45,573)	(30,043)
Other overheads	(65,031)	(90,022)
Total Expenses	(1,121,722)	(1,111,616)
Surplus (deficit) for the year	(35,913)	91,780
Total comprehensive income for the year	(35,913)	91,780

Balance sheet

	2018	2017
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Cash assets	490,799	449,852
Receivables	18,509	30,131
Inventories	95,647	73,441
Other	19,269	23,865
Total Current Assets	624,224	577,290
Non-Current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	37,612	12,097
Total Non-Current Assets	37,612	12,097
Total Assets	661,836	589,387
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities		
Payables	44,316	34,394
Provisions	73,130	54,875
Other	315,080	234,895
Total Current Liabilities	432,526	324,164
Total Liabilities	432,526	324,164
Net Assets	229,310	265,223
MEMBERS' FUNDS		
Retained surplus	229,310	265,223
Total Members' Funds	229,310	265,223

Income

Following on from a year of growth and profitability in 2017, the 2018 financial year provided challenges with additional costs and a retraction in revenue streams which had previously provided consistent growth over several years.

Total Revenue for the year was \$1,085,808, a decrease of \$117,588 from the previous year. A breakdown of the categories of Revenue follows:

INCOME	2018	2017	2016
Product Sales	253,948	339,828	344,670
Grants	707,000	686,000	703,283
Donations & Sponsorships	5,989	3,063	34,398
Copyright	14,460	13,632	8,662
Interest	2,469	4,704	9,484
Workshops	70,427	129,560	-
Projects Commissioned	31,515	26,609	11,960
Total	1,085,808	1,203,396	1,112,457

Breakdown of 2018 Revenue

- Product Sales
- Grants
- Donations & Sponsorships
- Copyright
- Interest
- Workshops
- Projects Commissioned



Breakdown of 2018 Expenditure

- Cost of Products Sold
- Depreciation
- Project Costs
- Employee Benefits
- Occupancy Costs
- Advertising
- Administration
- Other Overheads



EXPENDITURE	2018	2017
Cost of Products Sold	131,678	136,262
Depreciation	5,952	3,059
Project Costs	496,137	518,114
Employee Benefits	318,177	251,523
Occupancy Costs	80,076	64,640
Advertising	16,473	17,954
Administration	45,573	30,043
Other Overheads	27,656	90,022
Total	1,121,722	1,111,616

The importance of STEM learning for young children

STEM - Inspiration for families

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHS

Have you heard of STEM in relation to your child's learning and development? Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths or STEM, are fantastic opportunities to have fun, play and learn with your child. The years before school are full of opportunity for children to explore our world.

What does a week with your child look like?

Do they play by pouring cups of water, mixing paint colours, rolling a ball down a hill, planting seeds, doing a jigsaw puzzle, playing with blocks, counting items at the supermarket, making mudpies, watching clouds, finding insects in the garden? These are just a few activities with STEM concepts to explore, reflect, wonder, create and learn. What a great way to have fun together, talk about their ideas, and build the skills and understanding they need to be ready for school and be a lifelong learner.

What is STEM?

Science – Experimenting, predicting and discovering. What happens? How does it work? Will this work if I change something? What makes it go? Why does it change? The possibilities are endless.

Technology – Incorporate technology to enhance the learning, and not to replace it. Try to only use technology to demonstrate and not to take away or replace children interacting and fully engaging. For example, using an iPad to capture children's work or show videos of new ideas or concepts that you then try out for yourselves. Try not to just sit watching screens and never getting around to 'doing' it. Remember, technology isn't just about digital technology, it's about tools such as scissors, mixing bowls, spoons, staplers, screwdrivers, hammer and nails.

Engineering – Building, creating and constructing. Playing with blocks, creating constructions with recycled boxes and containers, making paper planes, discovering how things work and problem solving.

Maths – Numbers, patterns, shapes, sorting, measuring and matching. Maths and numeracy are everywhere, and young children will learn to count and identify shapes very early, and long before they learn to read.

