

The Reading Hour Wrap Up – advocacy in just 10 minutes a day

On 25 August 2012, the National Year of Reading launched its second headline event – The Reading Hour. This was a signature event for the National Year of Reading 2012 and also the campaign's call to action for families – "share a book with your child for 10 minutes a day, an hour a week".

Margaret Allen, chair of the National Year of Reading founders and State Library of WA, explained, "The phrase '10 minutes a day, an hour a week' is our 'slip, slop, slap'. It's the take away message that we hope will become the accepted norm. We know it's not always possible for parents to share a book at bedtime with their children, but if they can manage 10 minutes most nights, their child will have the best chance of becoming a good reader, with all the social and educational benefits that brings. Most of our brain development happens between birth and three years of age, so it's not enough to assume that children will learn to read when they get to school. Parents need to share stories and rhymes right from day one – and a good way of finding out more is to join storytimes, rhyme times, baby bounce, and toddler sessions at the local library."

The Reading Hour was nominally from 6pm to 7pm on 25 August, but events happened all day around the country. Key partners included Dymocks, Scholastic, The Walt Disney Company, and ABC Local Radio. Some highlights from across Australia include:

- Big screen fun at the Urban Screen at The Concourse, Chatswood, Sydney, with Marvel reading super heroes and prize giveaways, also beamed live to the Cultural Centre Screen in the Perth Cultural Centre.
- The Reading Hour party for kids at the Melbourne Writers Festival, in partnership with 774 ABC Melbourne and featuring ABC 3's Kayne and Amberley.
- Young reading champions were flown to Melbourne from all around Australia for a 'money-can't-buy' weekend, including being the special guests at the Melbourne Writers Festival Reading Hour party. The champions were the winners of competitions run by ABC Local Radio in every state and territory.
- The announcement of the winners of the Adult Learners Week competition 'It's never too late ... to learn to read', made possible by funding from the Australian Government Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education through VET National Programs Funding.
- The launch of the Big Issue annual fiction edition, featuring stories by well-known writers.

Every edition sold directly helps people who are homeless or disadvantaged.

- The Sydney Jewish Writers Festival opening night Reading Hour panel discussion with NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell and famous name authors.
- MS Readathon's '60 Minutes for MS' fundraiser on 24 August.
- Kumon Education Centres partnered with libraries to run events for families with English as another language.

The Reading Hour was supported by Disney Junior. You can see the stunning video spot specially created for the event on the website www.thereadingshour.org.au.

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Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with many requests that The Reading Hour become a yearly event. The National Year of Reading founder partners are looking at ways to carry forward some of the projects that have worked well during 2012 and have greater longevity.

On 12 November, at the National Library of Australia, in Canberra, there will be a legacy event for 200 invited guests to help shape what the future might look like. The National Year of Reading legacy event will be officially opened by Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC CVO, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia. It will be a celebration of the achievements of everyone who has participated in the campaign and it will be an opportunity to make recommendations to policymakers about the future of reading in Australia.



AUTHOR FELICE ARENA ENTERTAINS THE AUDIENCE DURING THE READING HOUR 2012