



# MEMBERSHIP DRIVE WINS ALIA NT RECOGNITION AWARD

**C**ongratulations to the City of Darwin Libraries' Children and Youth Services Team for winning the 2014 ALIA NT Recognition Award. The Team won the Award for their Paige and Dewey Book Buddy Libraries Membership Drive, first introduced in 2012 as part of the National Year of Reading.

The membership drive presented an opportunity to reverse the trend of dwindling library membership and usage by primary school children in the Northern Territory and sought to develop lifelong reading habits among young students by working in partnership with local schools. It encourages children to learn to read, helps those keen readers to find new sources of inspiration, and promotes the benefits of joining libraries with performances at school assemblies and at storytimes. The target demographic is Year One, as research indicates that lifelong learning behaviours are acquired at this age.

As part of the initiative, the Team visited every primary school in Darwin and offered storytime sessions introducing membership drive mascots, Paige and Dewey. The mascots bring their favourite things from the library – books, games, CDs, DVDs, audio books and magazines – to show the children and showcase the collection. A membership pack, designed for the children who sign up as members, is made available at the storytime sessions.

Classroom teachers distribute Paige and Dewey Book Buddy postcards and a colouring-in sheet to the children which, accompanied by a guardian, they can then bring into any branch of the City of Darwin Libraries to become a member.

Paige and Dewey branding has been used on children's library cards, membership packs and materials and each school receives a thank you article for inclusion in the school

newsletter that contains information about other resources and programs and reinforces the invitation to bring in the postcard and join the library.

This program is different in the way it reaches out to schools and has strengthened the relationship between the libraries and local schools. So far the results speak for themselves: all 27 primary schools in Darwin are participating in the program and other family members are also starting to register with the library for the first time.

Highlights of the membership drive have included the way it has brought families into the libraries and hearing surprised parents say their children have insisted on joining, and being able to reach out across cultural sectors to connect with schools with high numbers of indigenous students and intensive English students.

The drive has also provided an opportunity to support City of Darwin Disability Services with presentations at schools with students who have special needs and created opportunities for local authors to visit for school storytime sessions. There have also been discussions with schools about visits to the libraries for children from other grades to learn how to use the catalogue and other services.

Students enjoy reading, singing and participating in action songs during storytime visits and are also being educated on what our libraries have to offer, while staff members are enjoying redefining our libraries as community and cultural spaces. The Paige and Dewey Membership Drive has become an annual collaboration of students, teachers, parents and City of Darwin Libraries. Congratulations to the Library Team members Jennifer Yuen, Morgan Rickard, Mary Hammon, Natalie Pelligrino, Justin Schmidt, Natalie McDowell, Lorraine Pearce, Paige Setter, Jacqueline Bodel, Jaclyn Roberts and Tim Hansen.