

# AN ALL-ROUND SUCCESS STORY



The Reading Hour

**T**he Reading Hour was an event with simple instructions: between 6 and 7pm on 18 August, parents and children around Australia were encouraged to sit down together and read. But the simplicity of the idea of The Reading Hour belies the importance of what the event helps to inspire: a lifelong love of reading and the promotion of literacy in upcoming generations as a vital aspect of a happy and successful life.

Nearly half of Australia's adult population lack minimum literacy skills. LIS professionals know that this statistic means that these people are not only locked out of one of life's great joys – reading a good book – but it also means that they are unable to access the sources of knowledge and learning that libraries provide.

Chrissie Swan, Silver Logie-winner and much-loved Australian television and radio presenter, acted as the ambassador for The Reading Hour this year. She recently appeared in *I'm a Celebrity ... Get Me Out of Here!*, spending six weeks in the South African jungle braving monster mosquitoes, crocodile-infested rivers and the divas and dramas of reality TV.

Chrissie is an author herself, having published *Is It Just Me? Confessions of an over-sharer* in 2013, a memoir that muses on modern motherhood, celebrity life and love through a funny series of candid anecdotes. Her mission to advocate literacy in younger generations continued this year as she hosts the first series of *The Great Australian Spelling Bee*, in which 52 Australian kids compete against each other and diabolically difficult words in their attempts to be crowned the nation's top speller.

'Reading has always been so important to me, and when I had kids, books were an integral part of the time we spent together,' Chrissie said. 'I read to each of my kids at least



once a day and now my eldest is reading by himself at night, which is a real thrill for both of us!'

The Reading Hour was run by Love2Read, a collaboration between public libraries, communities and the government, which organised thousands of events across the nation to showcase the benefits of reading and help boost the literacy level of Australia. This year's events have been hugely successful, and the important contribution of celebrity ambassadors such as Chrissie Swan, who has been a tireless and enthusiastic advocate of the event, can't be underestimated.

'I always tell my kids,' said Chrissie, 'Only the smartest people know you can never be bored or lonely if you have access to a book.'