



First 5 Forever

Family literacy initiative for
Queensland

2015 evaluation

First 5 Forever 2015 evaluation

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First 5 Forever is a universal early intervention family literacy initiative with the primary aim of providing strong emergent literacy foundations and life-long learning capabilities for all Queensland children aged 0-5 years. The initiative is co-ordinated by State Library of Queensland (SLQ) and delivered in partnership with local councils and the network of over 320 Queensland public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres, government and non-government agencies.

Launching in 2015, evidence gathered throughout the initiative's implementation period highlights key achievements, success factors and recommendations for future years.



All images courtesy of the State Library of Queensland

Executive Summary

The fundamental finding from the data and evidence collected from 2015 indicates that SLQ has **delivered on all key outputs** outlined in the original funding bid. In fact, outputs and **outcomes** have **exceeded** original **expectations**.

A strong **foundation** has been laid from which to **build upon in subsequent years**. It is the opinion of the evaluator that the program logic is sound and will eventually create a **significant ongoing legacy for Queensland families**. Sustainability can be achieved by incorporating First 5 Forever into core business planning, systems and funding in Queensland public libraries.

Key achievements in 2015 at a glance:

\$4.5m

funding and support made available to 72 councils

85%

of participating councils submitted acquittals

98%

of Queensland's population covered by participating councils

24%

increase in library sessions for children 0–5, their parents and caregivers

445,000

attendances to in-library First 5 Forever activities

339%

increase in outreach sessions with 1,138 delivered in 2015

19,000

parent and caregiver toolkits distributed in 2015

625

community partners engaged

60%

of community partners formed as a direct result of First 5 Forever

14,000

page views on First 5 Forever's website in its first 2 months

17

community workshops delivered in 13 locations

569

participants trained representing 151 discrete, organisations, agencies and councils

100%

of participants would recommend the professional development workshops to others

Increasing access to emergent literacy experiences

Libraries across the state have been activated through First 5 Forever funding, providing increased resourcing and capability to deliver more emergent literacy programs directly to Queensland children aged 0-5 years and their families. In 2015, library sessions increased by an estimated 24%.

It is not only session provision that has been amplified through the initiative; libraries are also innovating and increasing accessibility through media and outreach strategies and developing trial schemes such as under-5s membership.

Improving quality of provision is one of First 5 Forever's core aims, with evidence from multiple sources across the implementation period highlighting that library staff are becoming more self-reflective, intentional and are striving to improve service delivery for target audiences. Qualitative evidence already supports positive change attributed to First 5 Forever participation on end-users (families) with parents describing enjoyment, increased confidence and changed

behaviour in the home in relation to shared emergent literacy activities resulting from their interface with library staff and activities. The full extent of the impact of the initiative is to be explored through further primary research in 2017 and will be a focus area for future evaluation.

Reaching all families with children under 5

Reaching out beyond libraries' traditional audiences to become a truly universal initiative is at the heart of First 5 Forever's theory of change. The increased level of outreach engagement across the state has been one of the initiative's key achievements during its implementation period. Outreach sessions increased by 339%, totalling 1,138 events and activities organised by libraries in the wider community in 2015. Not only have these activities helped engage more families, evidence suggests that libraries are increasingly being seen as a community hub and a welcoming and accessible space for families of 0-5s.

Nearly 19,000 parent and caregiver toolkits were distributed during 2015, supported by

over 134,000 additional elements such as magnets, postcards and buggy books.

Library staff describe the positive benefits the toolkits are having through enabling purposeful conversations about the benefits of emergent literacy with parents and caregivers, while the toolkits are presenting libraries with the opportunity to provide parents with resources that they can use at home. The toolkits have an important dual role within the initiative. Through the toolkits, existing library members receive information that enhances and amplifies their role as a parent. Non-members receiving the toolkit through outreach receive both the benefits of shared reading and a connection to the library through the interactions with staff and the physical materials. Social media interactions have highlighted the enthusiasm for the toolkits from end-users, the families. Future evaluation phases will explore response to the toolkits within target audiences.

Council buy-in to the toolkits did, however, vary significantly with some evidence that the role the toolkits play in supporting First 5 Forever's core aims is not fully understood across the network.

Collaborative partnerships and coordination

Collaborating with community agencies has significant benefits both for libraries and partner agencies. For families, services are increasingly accessible, consistent and ‘joined up’. For the sector, duplication of resources can be reduced, communities can be better understood, strategies can be aligned, and sustainable partnerships can be a collective goal.

In 2015, councils engaged with 625 partners relating to children 0-5, with the majority (60%) formed as a direct result of First 5 Forever. Around 40% of participating councils took part in a community reference group with involvement forging strong inter-agency links. The level of cross-sector working initiated and the access this has provided to 0-5s, their parents and caregivers was frequently referenced as a significant positive impact that First 5 Forever was having on libraries’ reach.

SLQ has ensured that the initiative has been shaped by expert guidance and input through employing a consultant speech pathologist

and securing endorsement of the First 5 Forever toolkit and resources by Queensland Health and Speech Pathology Australia.

From the start, SLQ identified maternity and child health staff and services as a crucial partner and has been successful at brokering cross-agency partnerships throughout the state. Qualitative evidence highlights the positive impact that First 5 Forever is having for new parents by providing access to holistic parental support through partnership working, with libraries being repositioned as a central accessible hub with library resources for parents to turn to.

SLQ has consistently sought out opportunities to work with Department of Education and Training (DET) at a strategic and local level. At a strategic level there have been a number of meetings with senior DET staff including: the Premier’s Office, Minister’s Office, Director General, Deputy Director General and senior policy and education officers.

SLQ participates and promotes collaboration in strategic forums such as Combined Cross Agency and DET Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) and Transition to School Working Group, Reading Advisory Group,

Metro Early Childhood Education Care (ECEC) Reference Committee Meeting and the Premier’s Reading Challenge program.

A number of ongoing collaborative activities and cross promotion strategies have resulted, including strategic partnerships with Queensland Health and Speech Pathology Australia.

Family and community awareness campaign

The First 5 Forever brand and supporting marketing campaign is multi-faceted, designed to be a vehicle for delivering consistent messages to parents and caregivers across the state, whilst having capacity to be implemented locally to be reflective of a library’s provision and its community’s needs.

First 5 Forever operates in a complex environment, with competition from past and current emergent literacy initiatives and challenges through library branding guidelines at a council level. SLQ has responded to this challenge by providing dedicated marketing expertise in-house and developing branding templates and resources.

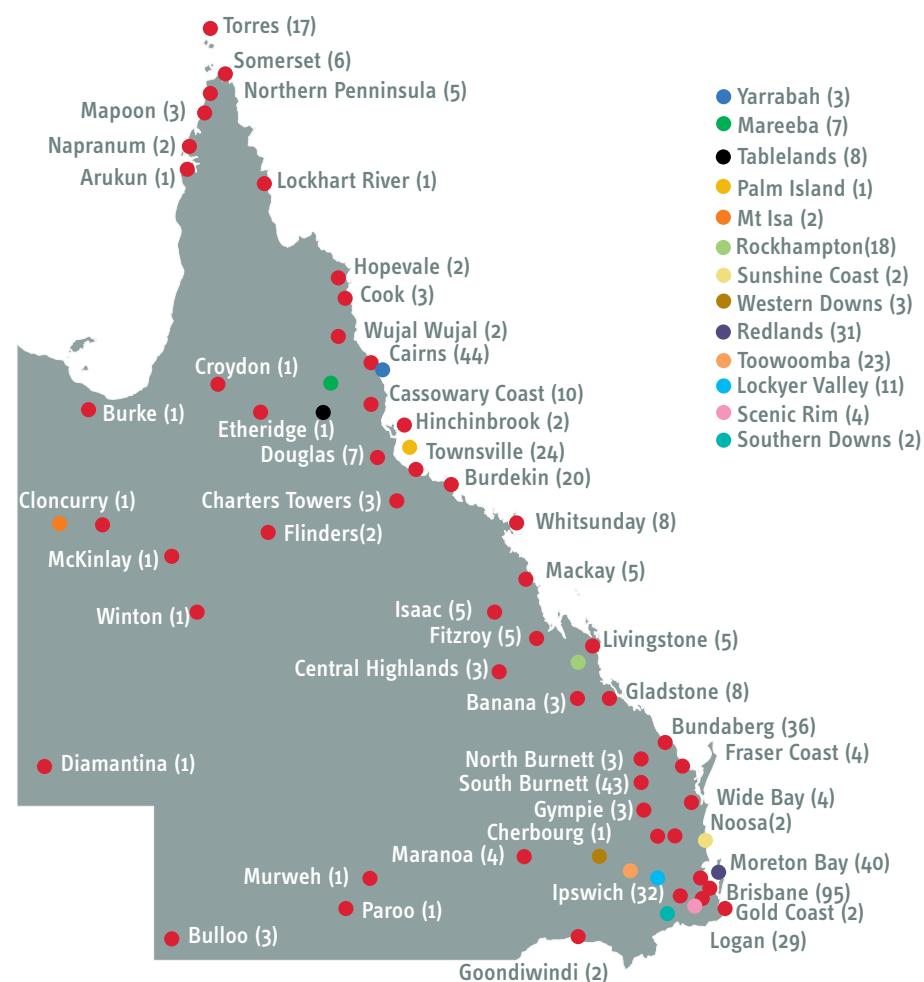
Engagement statistics from the centralised launch campaign were significantly above sector average, suggesting a compelling brand and engaged end-user audience. Social media engagement and qualitative feedback reveals that strong advocacy has already been activated among parents and caregivers. Future evaluation phases will capture brand recognition and the extent to which key messages are successfully delivered to parents and caregivers.

Crucially, the brand is having success not only in reaching families, but the strength of the initiative means that internally, emergent literacy is firmly on libraries' agendas and receiving increased recognition throughout councils. Externally the brand is also helping to consolidate cross-agency collaboration, with libraries successfully positioned as a key strategic partner with a consistent, quality message.

Workforce capability and standards

Investing in face-to-face First 5 Forever professional development activity has played a key role in activating libraries, engaging cross-

Locations of council staff attending Language to Literacy workshop #1 2015



The map above demonstrates the communities represented by library staff and Indigenous Knowledge Centre staff attending the First 5 Forever Language to Literacy workshops in 2015. The figures in brackets represent the number of participants from each geographical area.

sector staff, developing best practice skills across the network, encouraging self-reflective practice and sharing emergent literacy theory and knowledge. Enabling councils to host workshops has been particularly successful, allowing for networking across agencies and for a greater buy-in and shared commitment towards the common goals of First 5 Forever.

Over 77% of councils engaged in First 5 Forever workshops, forums or webinars in 2015, with sessions involving 569 participants from 151 discrete organisations.

Satisfaction with delivery has been very high with all participants reporting that they would recommend the workshops to others. The sessions were praised for the varied content and participatory delivery style. Quantitative data evidences a clear shift towards greater confidence, knowledge and skills as a direct result of participating in the First 5 Forever workshops. The successful outcomes of workshops mean that access to provision is in high demand.



Backbone organisation and collective impact initiative

The initiative employs a population-based cash grant methodology with weightings for demographics of under 5s, disadvantage and distance and is managed via a Service Level Agreement between SLQ and Local Government. First 5 Forever strives for collective impact at a local level by unleashing the considerable human and physical resources and potential of the 320 libraries across Queensland.

As the central body establishing, coordinating and administering First 5 Forever, SLQ has been the cornerstone of the initiative's successful implementation.

Councils participating in the First 5 Forever initiative potentially reach 98% of the Queensland population – the initiative is truly operating on a mass scale. Several measures quantify the achievements to date, from the highly received workshops and professional development sessions through to the successful engagement of the supporting publicity campaigns.

Qualitative feedback supports the idea of positive change in the field of emergent literacy across Queensland – both at a professional and end-user level. The challenge ahead is to quantify and successfully document this positive change through a series of metrics. For example, measuring libraries' commitment to professional development and how this translates into improved practice and parents' recall of First 5 Forever's key learning outcomes and the incidence of reported changed emergent literacy behaviour in the home. This evidence will be applied to refine the future program, adopt a model of continuous improvement across the network and leverage continued support that will ensure an ongoing legacy for Queensland families via First 5 Forever.

Key recommendations

Core deliverable area	Key recommendations
Increasing access to emergent literacy experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore increases in provision and quality at a council level, identify key success factors that underpin these advancements and share these successes across the network to help model best practice and set benchmarks. • Consider developing and implementing a set of guidelines for assessing quality of in-library emergent literacy practice. Family experiences of the program – which will be further captured in future evaluation phases – will add another dimension to performance data and help evidence positive change across the state.
Reaching all families with children under 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate the success of outreach activities widely, an activity which will promote First 5 Forever across the sector whilst also inspiring innovation within the library network. • SLQ to consider introducing minimum expectations for distributing the kits at a council level, and continue to communicate the benefits of the kits and their contribution to the initiative’s theory of change. Any barriers to purchasing the kits should be explored and tactics to overcome these developed. Evidence for the implementation period suggests that the value of the toolkits in reaching out to communities and facilitating positive change in emergent literacy in the home is not fully appreciated across the whole library network, however preliminary data directly from families indicates demand and positivity for the resources at the parent interface. The supply chain for First 5 Forever resources in some councils has been broken by a lack of understanding by upper and middle managers about the purpose of the toolkits. In some instances families have not been able to access toolkits as requested in local libraries.
Collaborative partnerships and coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLQ to reiterate the benefits and compliance requirements of council involvement in community reference groups and consult with libraries to understand if there are any barriers to taking part. • Continue building networks and links at a strategic level between agencies – brokering such relationships has had significant positive impact during implementation. Key decision makers and middle management within agencies and libraries should also be further engaged so that they fully understand the initiative and can support their staff implementing First 5 Forever partnerships on the ground. • Encourage libraries to continue to work at a strategic level with partners. This would strengthen relationships, bring about further economies of scale and support the sustainability of the First 5 Forever initiative.

Family and community awareness campaign	<p>Future data capture will provide granular detail on which marketing and information sources are most successful in engaging parents and caregivers. This data, along with media monitoring and analytics, can then help SLQ prioritise any further marketing investment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLQ to share clear guidelines around marketing content with councils and further develop media templates that libraries are able to personalise to suit local needs. This will ensure messaging remains on brand while offering councils the flexibility necessary to effectively engage with their particular communities. • Continue to monitor council application of the First 5 Forever brand to ensure consistency in brand value and potentially update brand guidelines in response. • Continue to document and celebrate the growing momentum of First 5 Forever and the success of helping prioritise emergent literacy within library networks.
Workforce capability and standards	<p>Professional development activity has been instrumental in activating library staff, strengthening the collective momentum of the network through providing a space to up-skill, interact and consolidate understanding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend accessibility and provide resources to enable First 5 Forever staff to continue delivering workshops in order to meet demand.
Backbone organisation and collective impact initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLQ to continue promoting and servicing the demand for face-to-face workshops and consider revising the Service Level Agreement to tighten Council compliance with the funding agreement. • Continue to explore different ways of sharing best practice across the network in order to ensure that the collective impact momentum is maintained.

Key terms used throughout this document

Baby Time sessions

Targeted sessions for babies aged 0–12 months and their families / caregivers.

Collective Impact

Collective Impact is a framework for facilitating and achieving large scale social change. It is a structured approach to bringing cross-sector organisations together to focus on a common agenda that results in long-lasting change.

Emergent literacy

Emergent literacy refers to the knowledge and skills developed in real life settings through engagement with literacy materials and people that are the precursors to later reading and writing¹.

Evaluation Framework

The Evaluation Framework is included within a separate document and articulates First 5 Forever's strategic plan, its Theory of Change, the initiative's outputs and outcomes, how these can be measured in future evaluation phases and how evaluation results will be applied.

Independent Libraries

Queensland public libraries where overall funding and operation is provided by the local council with assistance provided by State Library in the form of a cash grant, advisory and training services and provision of some centralised collections.

Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs)

Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs) are similar to libraries and have an emphasis on programs that encourage the capture and retention of traditional knowledge, culture and languages. IKCs are owned and operated by Indigenous Shire Councils. Councils are responsible for the physical infrastructure, staffing and day to day operations of their IKC.

Reference Groups

A group of individuals and representatives from organisations that work collectively to support and prioritise an agreed agenda in their local community.

Rhyme Time sessions

These sessions are primarily for children aged from approximately 2–4 years and their families / caregivers.

Rural Libraries Queensland (RLQ)

Queensland public libraries that service councils with populations under 15,000 where library stock and limited cash subsidies are provided through the Library Board of Queensland, in lieu of the standard per capita grant provided to Independent Libraries.

Service Level Agreement

A signed contract between the Library Board of Queensland and individual local councils that defines obligations and requirements in relation to specific grant funding allocations.

Story Time sessions

Sessions for children aged 2–5 years and their families / caregivers.

¹ Further information on definitions for emergent literacy are available within the following documents: Let's Read Literature Review (2013): www.letsread.com.au/getmedia/a5313369-d89b-4e11-931f-6cbe7588903e/2013-Let-s-Read-Literature-Review.pdf.aspx; Literacy Promotion Practice Resource, Centre for Community Child Health (2006): www.letsread.com.au/getmedia/b6ffabd8-5c3e-4618-b121-bce8b5993d4b/LiteracyPromotionPracticeResource.pdf.aspx; Zero to three: www.zerotothree.org.



Introduction

First 5 Forever is a **universal early intervention family literacy initiative** with the primary aim of providing **strong emergent literacy foundations** and **life-long learning capabilities** for all Queensland children aged 0-5 years.

Background

What is First 5 Forever?

First 5 Forever is a \$20 million collective impact initiative, co-ordinated by State Library of Queensland (SLQ) and delivered in partnership with local councils, government and non-government agencies, and in particular the network of more than 320 Queensland public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs).

The objective of First 5 Forever is to strengthen and enable the various platforms and community level factors that will directly reach and impact on emergent literacy outcomes for children from birth to five years and their families.

First 5 Forever connects children and families, through public libraries and their community partners, to the information, resources and support they need to bring about positive behavioural, cultural and social change in respect of language and emergent literacy.

Why First 5 Forever in Queensland?

There is a large body of longitudinal evidence to suggest that early childhood development is critical in determining life-long outcomes for children¹, stressing the importance of early years literacy as a key foundation for future quality of life and attainment.

Foundations of literacy start very early in life. Up to 90% of a child's brain development happens in the first 5 years² and literacy skills can predict later academic achievement. There are strong links between literacy, school performance, self-esteem and life chances, with poor literacy skills being linked with lower education, reduced earnings, poor health and social outcomes, high rates of unemployment, welfare dependence and teenage parenting³.



In Queensland approximately 36% of parents of 0–2 year-olds, and 52% of parents of 3–8 year-olds do not regularly engage their children in informal learning opportunities such as reading⁴, and current evidence suggests this role is not well understood by parents and caregivers of children aged 0–5 years in Australia⁵.

Queensland children are also under-performing against other states. In 2012, The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data indicated that a significant number of Queensland children start school weak in the language and cognitive domain and that 26.2% of Queensland children in their first year of school were developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains. In 2015 this has only improved slightly with 26.1% of Queensland children assessed as developmentally vulnerable or at risk on one or more developmental domains – including language and cognitive skills. This compares to 22.0% across Australia as a whole, with Queensland ranking sixth behind other states.

Queensland also faces demographic challenges with a significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and a higher proportion of children living in remote communities compared

to the Australian average. According to the AEDC, in the language and cognitive domain, Indigenous children in 2015 were nearly four times more likely to be developmentally vulnerable, and children living in Very Remote Australia were 4.8 times more likely to be developmentally vulnerable.⁶

Why Public Libraries?

‘Public libraries are the only government agency available to children from babyhood, providing year-round, free access to resources and services that support reading and literacy.’ Early Literacy Framework and Strategy for Australian Public Libraries ALIA

Public libraries in Queensland form a large active network with a statewide reach that includes metropolitan, rural, remote and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Libraries are neutral spaces where children and families can utilise a range of informal learning opportunities to explore, learn and expand their knowledge.

Queensland libraries are the major provider of free programs, activities and resources for children and families. These library programs offer a unique opportunity to create welcoming and supportive environments for parents and caregivers of young children and enhance the connection between the parent and their child and other families, while providing social and informal learning opportunities.

With over 320 branches across Queensland, public libraries are ideally placed to deliver the local connection necessary for this proactive partnered initiative.

A collective impact model

The First 5 Forever initiative is universal, meaning it is seeking to create positive change across the broad population of 0–5 year olds and their families in Queensland. First 5 Forever is aimed at all Queensland children under 5, their families and caregivers and recognises that it is only through partnerships and networks that consistent, quality messages and resources will be universally accessible. Through taking part in the First 5 Forever initiative, councils will need to

action a range of strategies that reach all sectors of the 0-5 population including the most vulnerable.

The initiative employs a population-based cash grant methodology with weightings for demographics of under 5s, disadvantage and distance and is managed via a Service Level Agreement between SLQ and Local Government.

By collaborating with the library network and harnessing the collective impact of partnering with multiple cross-sector agencies to work directly with parents and caregivers, First 5 Forever is seeking to bring about long-term, positive change to address Queensland's under-performance in child and family literacy.

Evaluation design and methodology

Rigorous independent evaluation

SLQ has commissioned an independent evaluator to review the initiative and provide recommendations for each year of First 5 Forever.

This report provides a topline summary of First 5 Forever's 2015 implementation period, evidencing

the initiative's impact and achievement of its core aims. On-going evaluation and annual reports will be produced for 2016, 2017 and 2018. The final report in 2018 will incorporate an overview of the initiative as a whole. Assessment of individual council's activity against the initiative's Service Level Agreement is not within the scope of this evaluation.

First 5 Forever will be evaluated in future evaluation phases using the methods outlined in the table overleaf.

A supporting evaluation framework is also available. This document presents further context to the First 5 Forever initiative, its program logic and more detail on the evaluation methodology.

Data sources used in the 2015 implementation evaluation

The data presented throughout this document comprises:

- Information provided by 50 councils detailing First 5 Forever activity February - November 2015
- Consultation interviews with 15 key stakeholders which took place in October - November 2016 and explored First 5 Forever's implementation period and progress to date
- Interviews with 10 parents and caregivers who had engaged with First 5 Forever in a range of different ways since the initiative launched
- 824 survey responses gathered pre- and post professional development and community training programs between March and November 2015
- Secondary sources of information, including data held centrally at SLQ and Google Analytics.

Please see the technical note at the end of this report for more information on the Phase 1 methodology.

First 5 Forever will be evaluated using the following methods:

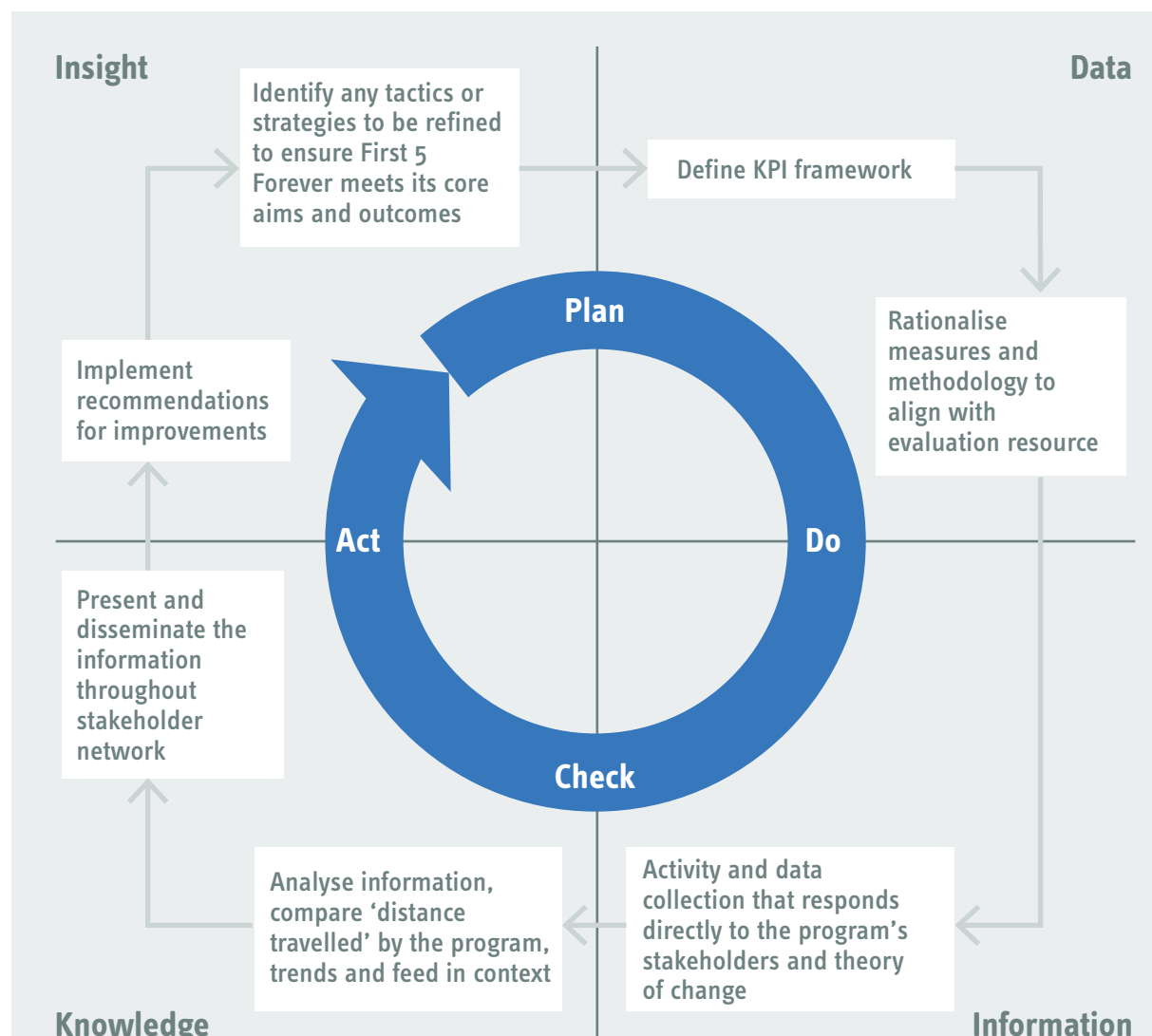
Stakeholder	Method	Description	Data type (quantitative and / or qualitative; primary or secondary)
Councils	Council reporting template	Data provided by Councils on library activity, spending and rationale	Quantitative and qualitative, primary
Library staff	In-depth phone interview	Core library staff working in delivering First 5 Forever, providing rich feedback on their experience and perceptions of the initiative	Qualitative, primary
	Survey	Library staff involved in delivering First 5 Forever and those taking part in professional development providing feedback on experience and perceptions of the initiative	Mostly quantitative, primary
Partners	In-depth phone interview	Core partner staff working closely with library staff delivering First 5 Forever, providing rich feedback on their experience and perceptions of the initiative	Qualitative, primary
	Survey	Survey designed to capture perceptions of impact from key partners, helping evidence the extent to which First 5 Forever is contributing to, and fostering joined-up partner objectives	Mostly quantitative, primary
Parents / caregivers	In-depth phone interview	Parent and caregivers who have engaged with a variety of different First 5 Forever touch-points, providing rich feedback on their experience and perceptions of the initiative's impact on their child. Participants would be recruited from the sample detailed directly below and this data would likely be analysed through a 'case study' approach	Quantitative and qualitative, primary
	Phone and online survey	Blended methodology to capture parent and caregiver responses to their involvement in First 5 Forever activities through a telephone or online survey. It is anticipated that some of this sample would be re-engaged in future evaluation phases in an attempt to evidence positive change on child development	Quantitative and qualitative, primary
	In-library parent miniature profile surveys	Administered by library staff on the ground. Data will provide a sampling frame for the phone and online method directly above and provide a data reference for weighting during analysis	Quantitative, primary
SLQ	Internal data	Data collated by SLQ internally, including order placements for First 5 Forever resources and professional development engagement	Quantitative, secondary
	Media analytics	Media monitoring activity, online analytics such as Google Analytics	Quantitative, secondary

Building continuous improvement into the process

The program logic recognises the need for the project to be self-reflective, adapting in response to progress and evaluation through adopting the continuous improvement process summarised in the model to the right.

- 1 'Children and Young People in Queensland Snapshot 2013', (2013: 70), APO: http://apo.org.au/files/Resource/26057_26057_fullreport.pdf
- 2 Engaging Families in the early childhood development story (2010) www.scseec.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Reports%20and%20publications/Publications/Early%20childhood%20education/Engaging%20Families%20in%20the%20ECD%20Story-Neuroscience%20and%20ECD.pdf
- 3 Heckman, J. Invest in the very young, Ounce of Prevention Fund 2000.
- 4 'Snapshot 2013, Children and Young People in Queensland': <http://web.archive.org/web/20140623063601/http://www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au/pdf/publications/reports/snapshot2013/Snapshot2013-full.pdf>
- 5 A practice guide for working with families from pre-birth to eight years page 12 www.scseec.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Reports%20and%20publications/Publications/Early%20childhood%20education/DECD_PracticeGuide_FINAL.pdf
- 6 <https://www.aedc.gov.au/resources/detail/2015-aedc-national-report>

Summary of the Continuous Improvement Process



Increasing access to literacy experiences

Libraries across the state have been **activated through First 5 Forever** funding, with increased resources and capability to provide more emergent literacy programs, both from in-library activity and through outreach. **Not only is quantity increasing**, but **improved quality is a key focus** of the First 5 Forever initiative.

Aim and outcomes

Overarching strategy: more places at public programs including Baby, Rhyme and Story Time sessions.

Queensland libraries are the major provider of free programs, activities and resources for children and families. These library programs offer a unique opportunity to create welcoming and supportive environments for parents and caregivers of young children and enhance the connection between the parent and their child and other families, while providing social and informal learning opportunities.

A key deliverable of First 5 Forever is increasing access to public programs in libraries through Baby Time, Rhyme Time and Story Time sessions, with libraries being activated to increase quality, capacity and reach.

This will help address increasing need, with evidence suggesting that demand outstripped supply in available places before First 5 Forever was launched in some regions.

Evidence of First 5 Forever's impact towards increasing access

24%
increase in sessions

There were an estimated 17,399 library sessions for children under 5 years and their families in 2015, a 24% increase in the number of sessions held in 2014.

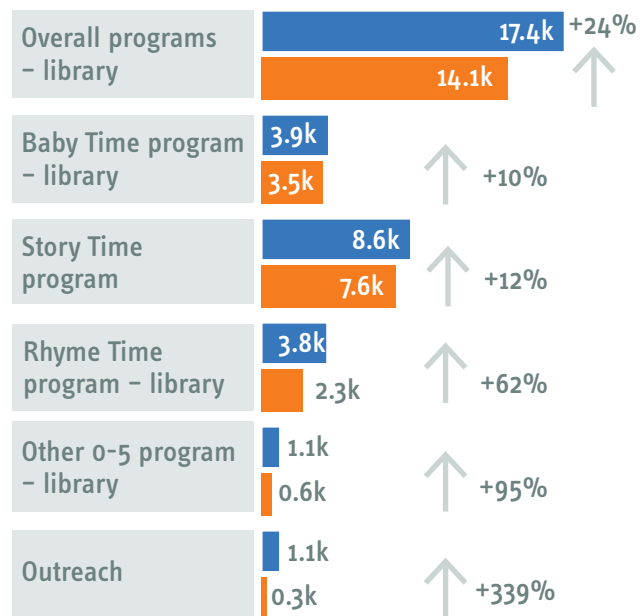
In total there were nearly 445,000 attendances to First 5 Forever activities held within libraries in 2015, an increase of 41,000 on the previous year, equivalent of 10% growth.



Increase in attendance was most pronounced for Rhyme Time sessions, with participant numbers up by 26% in 2015 compared to 2014.

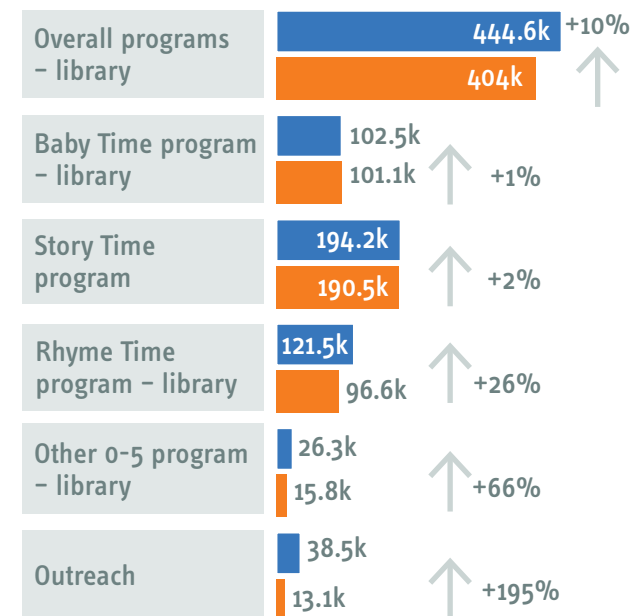
Participant numbers increased at a slower rate compared to the increase in actual number of sessions (10% compared to 24%). This may be related to the time it takes to establish new programs and raise parent awareness of the increased number of sessions provided. A review of 2016 data supplied by councils in December 2016 will provide a greater indication of attendance at First 5 Forever in-library programs.

Key program indicators – program numbers



[Base in-library 31,487, outreach 1387]

Key program indicators – participant numbers



[Base in-library 848,571, outreach 51,579]

During First 5 Forever 2015
Before First 5 Forever 2014

Innovations in family in-library services

Some libraries have introduced membership schemes for under 5s such as 'My First Library Card' or 'join your 0-5 to receive a kit' schemes designed to increase toddler membership and promote services to parents. One branch has reportedly seen a 433% increase in membership from the under 5s age range.

Over time, uptake of these sorts of schemes are one strategy that will help link families of under 5s to the free programs, activities and resources available in their local public library.

Increased quality of First 5 Forever in-library programs

Another key deliverable of First 5 Forever is to enhance workforce capability and improve the quality of current and future library programs. Libraries interface directly with families in the early years and have the important and unique role of communicating realistic and practical messages and linking library programs and activities to what families can do at home.

The inclusion of key First 5 Forever messages that explain the benefits of library programs, the importance of the first 5 years, the important

'How different it is to interact with babies, how they've got to be close to your face, so that's how they learn to sing and speak...I definitely learnt a lot, and learnt new songs.' Parent interviewee

role families play, as well as the inclusion of language and emergent literacy strategies that specifically link to what parents / caregivers can do at home is another core strategy and outcome of the First 5 Forever program.

Raising quality of delivery through mentoring library staff

Feedback on the professional development sessions and workshops delivered by SLQ staff demonstrate that a key impact has been encouraging staff to examine the quality of the programs they provide.

'... After the professional development training, that we had... last November. It was fantastic. ... we really saw how enthusiastic the community actually was in this area. However, what it actually did for us was that it made us realise ... there is a lot of interest, there's a lot of support out there, wanting to do similar things with a similar goal. However, we needed to have our services and our people, and our programs – they needed to be spot on ... providing not only effective, but quality programs.' Stakeholder interviewee

'Just wanted to let you know about my Story Time last Friday, following on from our PD [Professional Development] ... towards the end I ... thanked [the parents] for their participation and encouraged them to interact with their children at home, as their children's 'first and best teacher', and, as usual, had the opportunity for some one-on-one chats after the session was finished - reinforcing that message. Overall, the parents (and the kids) loved it - and I was really encouraged from their feedback. Beforehand I confess I felt a bit of pressure to implement some of the strategies we learnt - but these simple 'amplifying'(!) steps worked brilliantly and I was greatly encouraged!' Feedback provided direct to SLQ by workshop participant, August 2015

'I have been to many Story Time and Baby Rhyme training sessions and at the end of the day the emphasis is always on performing/entertaining and meeting statistics. I felt that the training session showed me ways to take the focus off me and to "facilitate" the sessions more to put the focus back on the parents and children.' PD participant



'After the first session I went home and had my niece (2) and nephew (4) over for the night... I decided to put into practice what I had learned at that day's session, just to see what would happen. I herded them onto the couch, grabbed "Where the Wild Things Are" and sat down to read. We discussed pictures (What is happening here? What could happen next?), we discussed words (forest, private, ruckus) and we picked pages that looked interesting. I have never seen those children sit so still in their whole lives. They were interested and engaged and sat with me for a whole 30 minutes pouring over every aspect of this book, practising the new words they had heard and talking about the pictures. It was amazing to see the difference in the way they responded to me when I used the techniques learned from training, as opposed to just reading books straight through from beginning to end. I have now incorporated these techniques into my work Story Time sessions and have seen a marked difference in the engagement and responses from the children who attend these Story Time sessions.' PD participant

'In short, I felt that I already knew how to present a pretty amazing Story Time session, and couldn't see what the benefit to me would be from attending these sessions. To say I was less than impressed with being required to attend would be a massive understatement. How wrong I was. The sessions were well set out, informative and interesting. The presenters were engaging and knowledgeable, and it was clear that they really do have a passion for increasing children's literacy levels in Queensland. Some of the statistics brought tears to my eyes. I assumed that because I found time in my busy life to read to my children, everyone else did as well. Both Kylie and Dan provided us with simple ways to improve our Story Time sessions, and ideas to incorporate into future sessions so that Queensland children are getting the best possible start they can. I have now incorporated these techniques into my work Story Time sessions and have seen a marked difference in the engagement and responses from the children who attend ... I thoroughly enjoyed the sessions, and benefitted greatly from them'. Feedback provided direct to SLQ by workshop participant, October 2015

'Without First 5 Forever and what we're doing now our community wouldn't have anything ... we can already see the achievements ... I can't believe the change in the kids that are attending our Monday Music and Play Time.' Stakeholder interviewee

'[I will now] explore new ways of building the quality of sessions. Use more simple examples of phonological awareness.' Professional development survey respondent

'I need to be able to evaluate what we're doing on a local scale ... so that can help guide our practice ... I'm sure there's room for improvement.' Stakeholder interviewee

'After attending the training staff had a new appreciation that stories are a vehicle for creative interaction rather than a restrictive entity ... Staff now read to the children on the same eye level and repetition has become a focus as well as the willingness to move away from the written text and create new stories with input from the children and through creative interactions.' Council 2015 report

Please see the chapter on workforce capability and standards for more information on this deliverable and impact in 2015.

Positive impact on families

Successful delivery of First 5 Forever's key messages to parents and caregivers

Interviewed parents were able to recall key First 5 Forever messages, highlighting the success of the initiative in raising awareness and appreciation of the importance of emergent literacy and how parents and caregivers play a primary role in facilitating this.

'They really taught us how to connect with [our babies] while we sang and how to do the movements and how to smile and sing very slowly.' Parent interviewee

Child enjoyment through taking part

Parents described seeing positive engagement and enjoyment from their children taking part in First 5 Forever sessions. In particular, parents discussed the noticeable calming and stimulating effects of singing to their children.

'I notice that he stops and really listens whenever I sing and he'll get excited or calm depending on the song ... For half an hour it was all about [him].' Parent interviewee

'You get a different response out of [babies] because it's a different environment, so they're looking around and it's different to just you and her interacting at home' Parent interviewee

'She was just so engaged, looking at our faces and smiling and giggling.' Parent interviewee

Evidence of changed behaviour in the home

There was general agreement among interviewed parents that participating in First 5 Forever provided motivation and new strategies to support their child's early language and literacy development in the home. The parents discussed how they had shared these strategies with other family members and friends.

'After going to Baby Bounce and learning the nursery rhymes, it's now integrated into her day. When she's just sitting there and wanting something to do we'll sit down and sing to her and do actions.' Parent interviewee

'My husband, I tell him everything I learn, so that when he's reading and singing [he knows what to do].' Parent interviewee

'If I hadn't been going to Baby Bounce, I wouldn't be doing [early literacy activities] as much. Because I go to Baby Bounce, they do talk to us about singing, incidental things like in the bathtub, I do it a lot more now.' Parent interviewee

Library staff aware of the positive impact on service users

The positive impact on service users was also noted anecdotally by library staff, both at a parent / caregiver and child level.

'There has been an instance with a pregnant mum and also a young Indigenous mum where we had a chat and I stressed the importance (and fun!) of reading with their child. I demonstrated with her young child and she said she could see a distinct difference in his facial expressions etc when I was reading to him.' Council 2015 report



'In terms of behavioural changes, as parents / carers attend more and more of our sessions we have noticed that they become increasingly confident in their singing and reading to bub.' Council 2015 report

In future evaluation phases, more extensive primary research will be done with parents and caregivers in an attempt to quantify the impact that engaging with First 5 Forever has had on, for example, attitudes to the importance of emergent literacy and changed behaviour in the home.

Recommendations

- **Evaluating at a council-level.** SLQ should consider factors for assessing increases in capacity and quality at a council-level. These factors will need to take into account both quantity, in terms of the numbers of sessions delivered and the number of under-5s, parents and care givers engaged, and quality. SLQ should consider developing and implementing a set of guidelines for assessing quality of in-library emergent literacy practice.

- **Enhanced data capture.** The 2016 reporting template for councils has been enhanced through using an online portal which should result in more accurate data on number of sessions and participants. More extensive primary data capture will happen at a parent / caregiver level in future evaluation phases.
- **More inter-library conversations.** The Library network would benefit from SLQ moderating and sharing more examples of best practice and learnings, with such content communicated across multiple platforms. Engaged discussions where libraries can share their successes and failures will help the initiative strive towards continuous improvement.



Reaching all families with children under 5

Reaching out beyond libraries' traditional audiences to become a **truly universal initiative** is at the heart of First 5 Forever's theory of change. The **increased level of outreach** engagement across the state has been one of the initiative's **key achievements** during its implementation period with sessions outside libraries increasing by 339% and **nearly 19,000** parent and caregiver **toolkits being distributed**.

Through this type of activity, libraries are **increasingly** being **seen as a community hub** and a welcoming and accessible space for families and 0-5s.

Aim and outcomes

Overarching strategy: Outreach strategies and information toolkits for parents / caregivers of young children that support their role as their child's first educator.

First 5 Forever enables libraries to extend their role as active connectors¹ in their community by going beyond the physical space of libraries and providing outreach. Connecting outreach to the non-user and engaging a wide range of families, including the most vulnerable and families from diverse cultural backgrounds, is a key deliverable of First 5 Forever.

One of the contributing strategies for connecting new and existing families to the resources and activities that libraries and their partners can offer is through the provision of toolkits. These are freely distributed to parents and caregivers through libraries and contain a quality age-appropriate book, play-based activities including a hand puppet, a nursery rhyme and story DVD, alongside information and tips about language and literacy and the value of shared reading with children.



The purpose of the toolkit is to provide parents and caregivers of 0–5s with quality resources, information and encouragement. The toolkit elements are multimodal and flexible and have been designed to better enable library and partner agency staff to engage in conversations with parents about the importance of talking, playing, singing and sharing stories within their everyday activities and for parents to have ‘take-home’ resources to encourage them to implement the ideas directly with their children. The First 5 Forever Language to Literacy workshop supports the implementation of the toolkits through providing written information and discussion about how the toolkits facilitate child access to quality emergent literacy activities.

The toolkits are supported by a range of complementary resources aimed at meeting the needs of varied community contexts and to providing libraries with flexibility. These items, as well as the toolkit, help library staff to have engaged, purposeful conversations and to communicate consistent and effective messages to parents and caregivers. Other resources include information magnets, printed literature and buggy books.

The toolkits and associated elements were designed to be flexible and responsive to Queensland’s network of over 300 public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres. The contents of this toolkit were researched and carefully chosen to provide a mix of practical elements readily applicable to a range of families across Queensland. The contents and all associated information were peer reviewed and endorsed by Speech Pathology Australia (national peak body for Australian Speech Pathologists) and Queensland Health’s Centre for Children’s Health and Wellbeing (a statewide team within Queensland Health whose purpose is to positively influence the health and wellbeing of children, their families and communities).

The main toolkits cost \$20 each, and there are currently no minimum or maximum order numbers in order to enable libraries to be responsive to their community’s needs. The recommended retail price of the *‘I’m a Dirty Dinosaur’* book alone is the same as the total price of the kit (\$19.99). During 2015 there were two order rounds, one in July and one in November.

The initiative’s outreach strategy also supports libraries in developing standards and capability to maximise the existing interface and opportunities that libraries have to connect their programming and resources with children 0–5 years and families in their local community. Libraries are encouraged to increase their reach through forming partnerships and developing programs that go beyond the libraries’ physical building and supporting the universal ambition of the program.

Evidence of First 5 Forever's impact towards reaching all families with children under 5

339%

increase in outreach events

The rate of growth within outreach activity has been a particularly notable achievement of First 5 Forever during its implementation phase; the number of events or sessions increased more than three-fold, reaching 1,138 in 2015 (a 339% increase). The estimated number of participants engaging through these sessions nearly doubled to reach 38,500 which represented an increase in attendance rates of 195%.

Several stakeholders commented on the increased capacity First 5 Forever funding had allowed by taking library activities outside the library itself and into the community.

'[First 5 Forever has] enabled us to look outside the box of what we would normally do within the library and start looking at what we can do out in the community.' Stakeholder interviewee

'While it has always been a goal to take the library out to the wider community, First 5 Forever has seen that happen a lot faster than it [otherwise] would have.' Stakeholder interviewee

'One of the biggest issues with public libraries is the people that come to you are the ones that are probably less at risk, so having the ability to get out into the community to try and reach those that would be probably less likely to take advantage of these sorts of programs has been quite significant.' Stakeholder interviewee

'We are using our First 5 Forever opportunities to do outreach ... our focus is the people who don't come to the library ... it's our aim to go out there and educate them about the First 5 Forever messaging, trying to get them to engage with something that we're doing outside the library with the hope that that may encourage them to then go into the library.' Stakeholder interviewee

Repositioning libraries within their communities and connecting with families

Library staff and parents consulted in the research commented on the positive impact that First 5 Forever outreach activity was having in promoting libraries as accessible, welcoming community spaces for caregivers and their children.

'I do feel as though First 5 Forever has definitely... been a springboard for us to be able to take... what we do at the libraries out. And to showcase, I suppose, what we actually do, and what we offer at the library.' Stakeholder interviewee

'I think its main impact has been reconnecting families to their local libraries, making libraries not seem like a dusty place, but a space where children and families are welcome.' Stakeholder interviewee

'The library has noticed our parents are asking more questions on what is available to them from the library and SLQ. More loans of items and an interest in bringing the children into the library on days with no programs running.' Council 2015 report

'When the mums that are coming in ... see what a wonderful place ... the library is, they're joining the library.' Stakeholder interviewee



'[There have been] large increases in numbers of families attending programs. This includes families who have started attending programs within the library who have discovered our programs through outreach sessions.' Stakeholder interviewee

'I think that there is some scope there for better education for all library practitioners about the value of... making libraries more of a... safer space.' Stakeholder interviewee

Nearly 19,000 toolkits distributed in the implementation phase

18,982 toolkits were distributed in July and November 2015 purchasing rounds across participating libraries and this accounted for 8% of total allocated funding awarded from January 2015.

Library purchasing of toolkits varied significantly across different libraries, reflecting the varying amounts of funding received. In July, 28 of the 60 participating councils ordered toolkits and other First 5 Forever materials. Of those that did, the majority (25 or 89%) were independent libraries; 3 libraries within Rural Libraries Queensland ordered packs. The proportion of total funding spent on packs in July also varied considerably, ranging from 55% down to 1% or less. For the councils receiving the 10 largest amounts of money, 8 had below average spend allocation for Toolkits in July 2015.

115,439 additional elements were distributed totalling 134,421 resources to 47 councils across Queensland. These additional elements accounted for 2% of funding spend in the July and November 2015 order rounds. The most commonly ordered resources included the 'Green Sheep' buggy book, 'Let's Play' Board Book and First 5 Forever promotional postcards.

‘[The toolkits have] been terrific, they’ve had wonderful feedback, people have just loved it and as soon as people started to find out about it, they came sourcing it.’ Stakeholder interviewee

A successful strategy for achieving universal engagement

The positive impact that the toolkits have played in promoting First 5 Forever, communicating its core messages to parents and caregivers and being able to hand out multi-modal resources families can keep and use at home was noted by several library staff.

‘[The toolkits] promote the program, it allows us to add our own promotional materials so that people are aware of when our sessions are happening. It provides ... support for parents and carers about the importance of the program and building those connections with the zero-five age group.’ Stakeholder interviewee

The toolkits are also enabling library staff to interact with a broad audience outside the library and there is anecdotal evidence that the resources are bringing in new audiences.

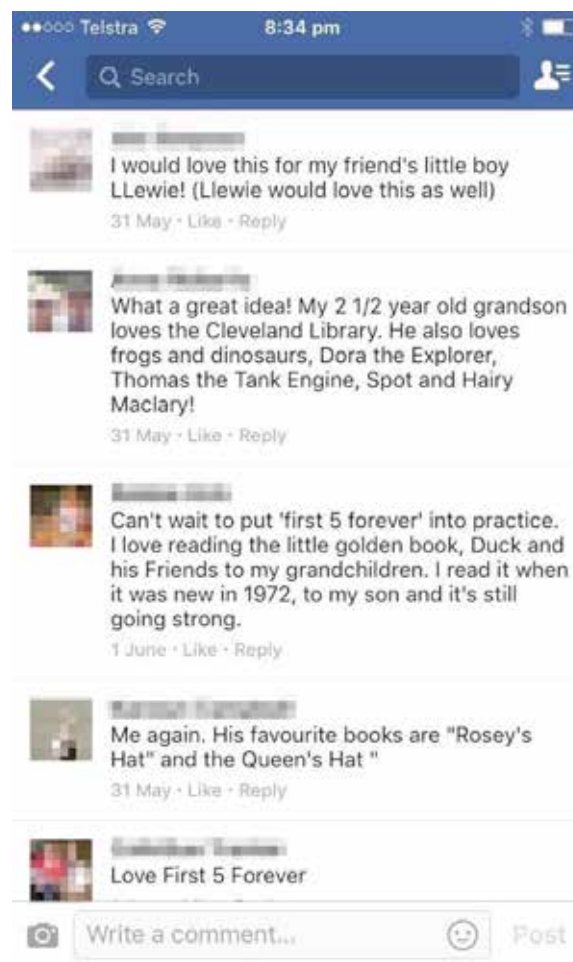
‘[Planned improvement for 2016] Using First 5 Forever Packs in our First Born Baby Packs to be handed out to newborn babies in the shire. Trying to engage the parents right from the start.’ Council 2015 report

‘We are starting to receive back the promotional postcards we handed out in outreach sessions as new parents come to sign themselves and children up as members and receive their First 5 Forever toolkit. These new members have expressed delight in the children’s collection available for loan and the opportunity to meet other new parents.’ Council 2015 report

‘Handing out ‘show’ bags [parent toolkits] to all children in childcare centre visits is proving to be effective. This ensures children take the bag home to show their parents. We are hearing feedback from staff that more parents are now bringing their children in due to the information they have received and their child’s demands to visit the library.’ Council 2015 report

Conversations on social media also highlight that parent and caregivers are seeking out the kits as well as the extent to which the kits have encouraged positive word of mouth.

‘...if you haven’t got one of these packs you totally should. The book is fantastic.’ Comment on Facebook



Using First 5 Forever as a platform for engaging those at risk

In partnership with a community agency, a regional library has been taking First 5 Forever into the Women’s Correctional Centre, delivering outreach sessions and distributing toolkits.

Through the initiative, mothers have the opportunity to interact, play, talk and sing with their children. In receiving a First 5 Forever toolkit mothers are able to read the book with their child and then give the book to them to read when they are with their carers. This book then becomes a shared activity and a connection for families when they are apart. This is one example of a program specifically addressing our most vulnerable families. As First 5 Forever is universal, libraries provided many other examples of using the toolkits to engage with families, encouraging those who already attend library programs to implement the ideas at home and linking new families to libraries and what they have to offer.

‘The First 5 Forever pack will be a great resource for my 3 yr old grandson.’ Comment on Facebook

Distribution challenges

The most common challenge described by councils during the implementation phase related to delays in receiving the parent toolkits and resources. There is a perception for some staff that cost is a barrier to implementing First 5 Forever resources, however funding has been provided to councils for this purpose. Occasionally libraries reported storage problems preventing them from ordering more.

The complexity of distributing First 5 Forever materials across the state should be noted, with large volumes of the kits unable to be stored centrally and delays at the manufacturing supplier end leading to delays along the supply chain.

‘It took ages for the packs to arrive... it was a bit of a challenge when you’re told they’re arriving at this time and there’s delay, delay, delay, so you’re a bit like ‘well how much do we promote it?’ Stakeholder interviewee

‘I don’t get a big library budget. So I haven’t been able to afford to [buy] any parent kits yet [Council in receipt of just under \$3,200 of funding annually].’ Stakeholder interviewee

Recommendations

- **Reiterate required commitment to the toolkits.** Not all councils purchased and distributed First 5 Forever resources during the implementation period, despite this being a requirement within the Service Level Agreement. It is recommended that SLQ monitor uptake at a council level and consider introducing minimum guidance on expenditure expectations.
- **Clarify and communicate.** SLQ’s position on libraries developing their own First 5 Forever toolkits.
- **Reiterate and evidence the value of the toolkits.** Ensure that the program’s logic and the role that the toolkit plays in this is fully understood at a council level. Help libraries and councils to appreciate the value of the toolkit and resources by sharing data on the impact that the toolkit

has on parents and under-5s, once this has been gathered during future evaluation phases.

- **Encourage more inter-library conversations.** Encourage libraries to share distribution tactics across the network. Sharing knowledge about which contexts successfully enable staff to have rich engagement with parents and offer the opportunity to reinforce First 5 Forever’s key messages should help maximise the impact of distributing the resources. Innovations in outreach events and tactics, successes and leanings should be widely communicated and discussed across the network.
- **Review the supply and distribution options for the toolkits.** Opportunities for placing orders more frequently could help increase uptake at a library-level.

1. ALIA describes libraries as ‘more than simply service providers to library users, they are active connectors for families and other agencies ... this role as ‘active connectors’ is something all public libraries can recognise, value and expand upon.’: https://www.alia.org.au/sites/default/files/ALIA-PLAC-Early-Literacy-Framework-Strategy_0.pdf

Collaborative partnerships & coordination

Collaborating with community agencies has significant benefits both for libraries and partner agencies, **increasing access, reach, consistency, efficiency and sustainability**.

In 2015, councils engaged with 625 partners relating to children 0-5, with the majority formed as a direct result of First 5 Forever. Involvement in **reference groups** has helped forge **strong, strategic links** across different agencies.

Aim and outcomes

Overarching strategy: Libraries collaborating and partnering with community agencies to reduce duplication, increase cohesive services for families and ensure consistent key messages and long term sustainability.

To maximise opportunity and access for families, the Service Level Agreement highlights to libraries the importance of joining or establishing a local steering or advisory group to ensure that children 0-5 and a focus on emergent literacy are on the community's agenda. Highlighting the First 5 Forever initiative within communities and continuing or establishing a shared vision fosters and encourages improved inter-agency collaboration, including early childhood educators and maternal child health nurses who are some of the other major partners working with children and families 0-5. These partnerships ensure families' needs are the focus of services by encouraging a shared knowledge and understanding of each other's roles, as well as helping libraries further understand their community's needs.

Through collaboration and shared understanding, cross-sector agencies can promote libraries as being well positioned as universally accessible with programs that develop parent confidence, knowledge and skills in engaging with their children in play and language-based activities. Libraries also offer a range of free resources and programs. Key partners include maternal and child health nurses, along with the early childhood education and care staff, playgroups and other government and non-government agencies directly supporting families of young children. The aim is to help communicate consistent key messages to parents across multiple points in time. Through local networks and partnerships, long-term strategies can be planned to ensure sustainable and needs-based community outcomes.

Evidence of First 5 Forever's impact towards developing partnerships

Partnerships at a local level

First 5 Forever, a catalyst for new partnerships

625

Partners relating to children 0-5 engaged in 2015 by councils across Queensland

60%

Of these partnerships were a direct result of First 5 Forever

Council reporting evidences a wide cross-section of partnerships being initiated and sustained through First 5 Forever. Links range from playgroups and local education groups to private business, through to health groups and networks.

'There's been a number of fantastic... networks and partnerships that we've created. So one is with Child Health ... the other one is with Speech Pathology.' Stakeholder interview

'One of our key objectives [through First 5 Forever], was to really get out into the community and find out what others are doing ... our partnerships with the local playgroups have really increased ... through the Story Time and Baby Bounce training sessions, we've been able to connect with people in the Department of Health, the Department of Education, so it's really got us thinking more about how we incorporate our services into the community and support others that are doing similar things.' Stakeholder interview

Partnerships underpinned by reference groups

During the November 2015 reporting round, 19 of 50 councils who returned data reported taking part in a formal reference group. Stakeholders described a number of positive outcomes from being involved, including libraries being positioned as a core community service, groups facilitating effective partnership actions, and agencies benefiting from a more holistic understanding of local community needs.

'I'm part of the Early Years Voice group, and part of the Arts and Cultural Reference panel, and just being within those groups, I'm probably more aware of the opportunities to share what we do with those groups, and we've received such positive feedback from other community groups.' Stakeholder interview

'The first meeting of the reference group, I think we had six. The second meeting, I think we had ten, and the one I had last week we had I think ... 16 at the table ... the other ways I think that it's really helping is that ... instead of us chasing down outreach and partners and opportunities, we're now being sought out as a partner of choice.' Stakeholder interview

Maximising reach into diverse communities

As First 5 Forever is a universal initiative, councils are advised to partner with a wide range of community partners in an attempt to reach as many families with children 0-5 years as possible. Engaging non-library users is an ongoing strategy for councils, but First 5 Forever has provided councils with funding to engage the wider community and increase access.

Through a combination of outreach and community partnerships, First 5 Forever has enabled libraries to reach a greater proportion of families with children 0-5 years. This has included vulnerable families, Indigenous communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and non-library users.

‘The [local] Indigenous community run a mums and bubs group and invitations to attend Story Time had been unsuccessful so we have started to visit their centre on a fortnightly basis to do Story Time sessions.’ Council 2015 report

‘[We have seen] a noticeable knock-on effect ... the networks we have developed with community organisations ... Under 4s Focus Group ... Child Health, Kindergartens, Child Care Centres ... we are seeing a wider effect on the library as a whole.’ Stakeholder interviewee

‘The library has undertaken regular visits to the multicultural playgroup and conducted Story Times. They have also had a bulk loan of our bilingual books.’ Council 2015 report

Repositioning libraries as a community hub for new parents

Through partnerships and shared understanding, the broader community will gain a greater appreciation of the broad role that libraries can play within a community. Libraries are neutral spaces where children and families can utilise a range of informal learning opportunities to explore, learn and expand their knowledge. They are free and offer a range of resources, services and activities for both children and their families.

Through the First 5 Forever initiative, the First 5 Forever team at the State Library has been working with the Queensland State-wide Child and Youth Clinical Network (SCYCN). The SCYCN was established in 2009 and is made up of clinicians from Queensland Health, research organisations, non-government organisations, general practice and consumers. Its aim is to focus on children and young people’s health from a state-wide perspective. In 2015, the First 5 Forever team presented to the SCYCN and, resulting from this, a letter of support and endorsement from the Chair of SCYCN was sent to all Hospital and Health Service CEOs across Queensland encouraging them to support the collaboration between libraries and Child Health within their local communities.

The Child Health sub-network sits within the SCYCN with a particular focus on state-wide

Child Health Services. The First 5 Forever team have been working with the Chair of the Child Health sub-network and other key stakeholders to garner support and a shared strategic vision of the role libraries and Child Health can play together in supporting young families.

Through discussions and information provided jointly by the State Library and Child Health sub-network, libraries and Child Health staff were encouraged to look at local opportunities for partnership, collaboration and co-located services. The First 5 Forever team recognised the need for a clear partnership and transition from Maternal Child Health services into free library programs for families. An opportunity existed to utilise the existing Child Health partnership with families to then encourage parents to access life-long resources and their local community hub through library services.

Moving beyond the library as a community space and into true collaborative service provision has seen a range of strategies implemented across the state. Child Health clinics in libraries, Child Health nurses attending Baby Time and Story Time sessions and being available for families' developmental needs, libraries attending Child

Formalised cross-agency collaboration

State Library and local library and health staff in one regional community worked together to establish a common understanding and discuss possible actions. Resulting from this, a Memorandum of Understanding was developed and signed between SLQ and Queensland Health. Collaboration started in October 2015 with Birth and Beyond which involved child health nurses visiting the library weekly to provide information to families.

Birth and Beyond is promoted through the Littlest Bookmark and Queensland Health nurses join in during Toddler Time to interact with parents and children. The nurses also offered a Toddler Group Session discussion for parents in the library. In exchange, First 5 Forever offered a pop up library at the Community Centre and presented a Parents' Workshop at the Child Health parents' groups. (Information from 2015 Council report).

Health and Immunisation clinic waiting rooms to engage with families, and libraries attending new parent groups are just a few examples that have been reported. Successful collaboration at both a strategic and local level has empowered staff to explore options within the First 5 Forever initiative.



'I'm keen to wait until [more] First 5 Forever groups are running out in our local libraries ... my vision ... there would be groups of a high standard. And a consistently high standard. So that I could be encouraging a client to go to a Baby Time ... feeling confident that they're going to feel welcome, supported, and learn... ways to help their child in their journey of literacy ... and as Child Health nurses, we can feel really comfortable to encourage and almost refer our clients.' Stakeholder interviewee

Positive social impact for new parents should not be under-estimated

Parents interviewed for this evaluation phase described the significant social benefits that they themselves experienced through taking part in First 5 Forever. Anecdotal evidence provided by libraries also supports this outcome.

'I find it's helped me quite a bit [going to Baby Bounce] and also talking to all the other mums there and that as well, it's good.' Parent interviewee

'Each time I've gone, I've actually gone with a friend and it's been a reason, like, instead of saying, 'Let's meet out for a cuppa' ... we decide, 'Oh, let's go meet at Baby Bounce,' ... it turned out we knew half the girls there anyway, so it's been-, yes, it's really good.' Parent interviewee

'[First 5 Forever activities provide] The opportunity to catch up, meet new parents and their children, opening new friendships and giving them some new networks of other parents with children in their own age group.' Council 2015 report

SLQ crucial in brokering cross-sector relationships

The First 5 Forever team has recognised the need to broker partnerships at a strategic and state-wide level, as well as encouraged councils to establish local partnerships.

The First 5 Forever team has established links with Queensland Health's Centre for Children's Health and Wellbeing (CCHW), who focus on a range of strategies to support primary health care across the state. This team has peer reviewed the First 5 Forever toolkit contents and resources and supported the development of the toolkit. Through partnership with CCHW, during 2015, the First 5 Forever team worked on including First 5 Forever information and website details in the booklet that accompanies the Personal Health Record Book, which every new parent in Queensland receives. The outcome of this partnership will be highlighted in the 2016 report.

The following extended interview quote is from a new mum with a 2-year old daughter. The response highlights the impact that integrated service working can have in giving quality support to new parents.

'I actually heard about Baby Bounce as part of First 5 Forever going through the early childhood, well, it's run by Child Health, the Early Parenting program that they do, and so in one of the sessions there, it was fantastic actually, because the girls from the library came down and told us about First 5 Forever, and gave us the spiel about that and Baby Bounce ... we've just loved it ever since. We've been going at least once, or twice a week even, for the last couple of weeks, and yes, I just think it's fabulous ... you want a bit of guidance as a new parent, and you want support, and you want to know that when you're at home, which is most of the time, you're on the right track for making it fun and learning and all that sort of stuff, so it really gives you confidence in that. The group itself is lovely, being run in the library, it's just a really non-threatening, non-clinical environment ... You don't necessarily think of the library ... you get a list of your support in the community as a new parent when you have a baby, and there are things like early child health and, you know, like patient consultants ... and all that kind of stuff, but you don't necessarily think of the library as a good source, as a first-line source of support, and I think that it is, because yes, there are people there like the people that run First 5 Forever, that really can help you when you have a new baby ... I have a lot more confidence now, having gone to Baby Bounce and got into the library thing a bit more, because I feel like whenever I come to, you know, the next level or the next challenge in a few months' time, I'll know where to go now to ask where to get resources ... whereas before I just felt like I didn't even know where to start, really, trying to navigate it on my own all a bit.' Parent interviewee

'We've been actively out with childcare centres ... going to communities ... ante-natal and post-natal groups ... most of those came through a connection from [SLQ] in Queensland Health, where they contacted us and then we started running programs for those groups.' Stakeholder interview

'[Kylie]'s had really good linkages, and I think that's been so important. ... in health... in child development... we shouldn't try to act alone. And I think she's been very, very smart.' Stakeholder interviewee

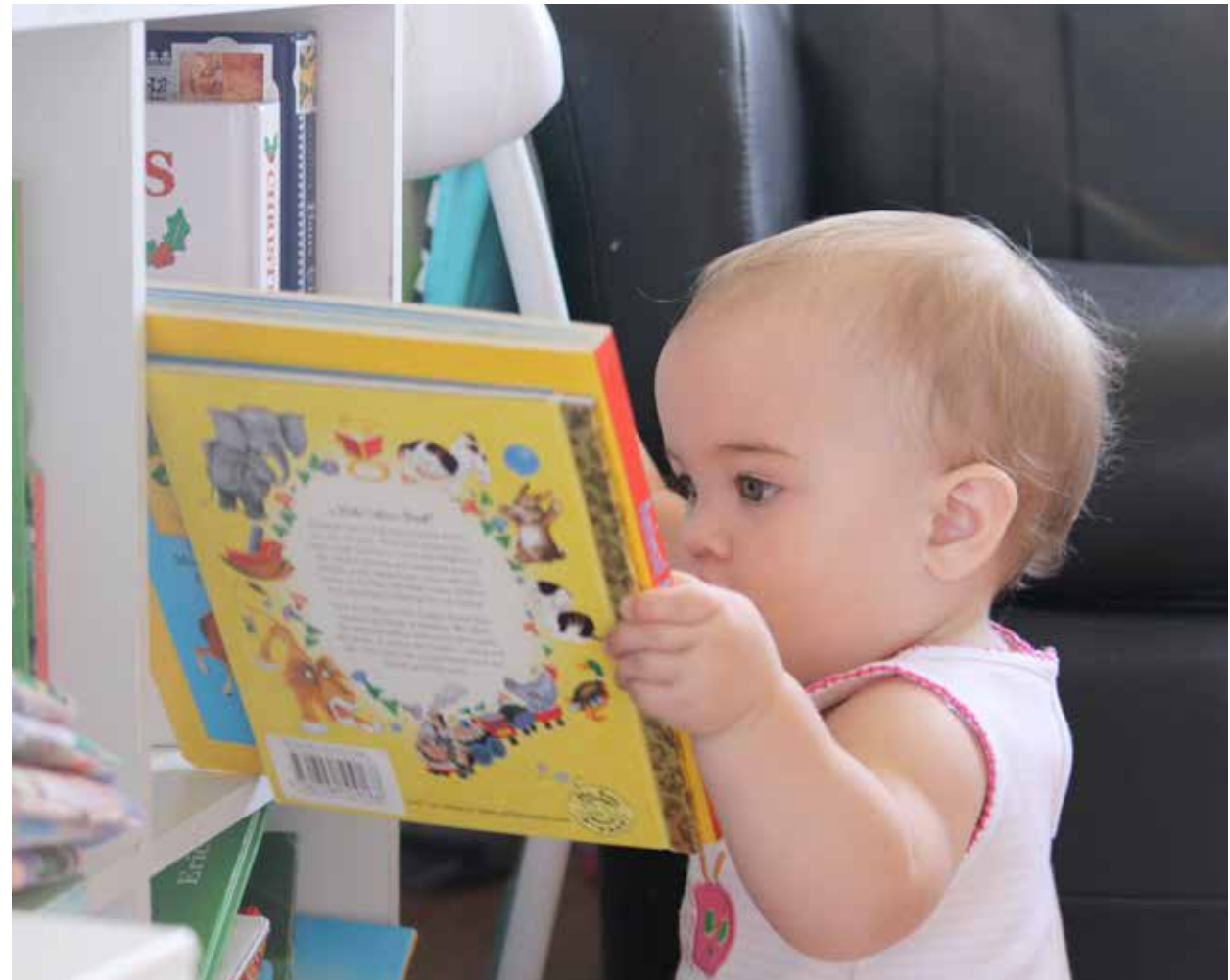
Mutually beneficial partnerships: towards a stronger sector

In early 2015, the First 5 Forever team approached Speech Pathology Australia, the national peak body for Speech Pathologists to inform them of the Queensland First 5 Forever initiative. Speech Pathology Australia supported First 5 Forever with the board of Speech Pathology Australia reviewing and supporting the First 5 Forever toolkit contents and information prior to its initial release. They have also supported all subsequent resource distribution rounds. In mid 2015, they approached State Library to partner in hosting the annual Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year awards which occurred for the first time in Queensland in 2015. These national awards showcase quality Australian literature that encourages language and emergent literacy, aligning strongly with First 5 Forever's key aims and objectives.

'Speech Pathology Australia is very pleased to be involved with the program because, as a profession, we know how critical early language development is for all aspects of learning including literacy ... Oral language competence is a foundation skill for educational outcomes, social and emotional well-being, future employment prospects and quality of life ... Speech Pathology Australia was pleased to be involved in the First 5 Forever initiative as it is of high value and is aligned with our key messages around the importance of early language and literacy abilities in young children. Our partnership with First 5 Forever has been mutually beneficial.' Stakeholder interviewee

Recommendations

- **Tailor sector promotion of the initiative for different levels of management.** There is some suggestion that middle management within partner organisations do not always fully understand the program and how involving their staff on the ground would enable cross-agency collaboration to work towards common goals. SLQ could build on the advocacy role it is already playing by targeting more decision makers and presenting more evidence of First 5 Forever impact to core partners at a senior level.
- **Reiterate the benefits and compliance requirements of council involvement in reference groups.** Evidence from emergent literacy programs elsewhere, as well as First 5 Forever's implementation, highlights the positive impact that reference groups can have in forming and maintaining cross-sector working. Future evaluation phases should explore why some councils are not involved in this activity so that tactics can be developed to enable all councils to meet this requirement within their funding agreement.



Family & community awareness campaign

The First 5 Forever brand and supporting marketing campaign is **multi-faceted**, designed to be a vehicle for delivering consistent messages to parents and caregivers across the State, whilst having capacity to be implemented locally in reflection of a library's provision and its community's needs.

Evidence reveals a **compelling campaign** that is supported through strong word of mouth and a brand that **resonates internally and externally**.

Aim and outcomes

Overarching strategy: a state-wide awareness campaign aimed at parents and primary caregivers.

The supporting awareness and publicity campaign targets parents, caregivers and influential organisations and individuals. It helps to promote the central message that rich early language and literacy environments are vital in providing children with the best start from birth, the important role families play, and how families can access quality activities and resources and support at their local library.

The First 5 Forever branding provides the campaign with a consistent identity that is carried through all elements of First 5 Forever activity, from the parent toolkits, through to a suite of branding templates that libraries can adapt and apply in a local context. The 'First 5' element is designed to immediately orient the program to children under five, increasing relevance to parents and caregivers of children 0-5. The 'Forever' element is designed to highlight the benefits for life long learning capability.

The brand colours and treatment are also designed as visual cues for the intended audience.

Evidence of First 5 Forever's impact towards a transformative marketing campaign

Building momentum for the brand

First 5 Forever's statewide marketing campaign launched in November 2015 and utilised a range of digital strategies to communicate the importance of reading and learning for children aged 0-5.

SLQ spent over \$200,000 on campaigns in November and December 2015, excluding the First 5 Forever website..

The core marketing activity and achieved reach is summarised in the table on page 43.

Some of the stakeholders consulted within this evaluation described the branding as effective in gaining ground in target audiences.

'I think they've been very clever. I think their branding is wonderful ... it's very recognisable ... simple.' Stakeholder interviewee

'Once you have all the activities running under it, people are getting very used to the branding, and they know what it is now, in our town. But if you went up to somebody that wasn't necessarily involved with children, I don't think they'd understand from those three words what it means.' Stakeholder interviewee

'I definitely tell people about it and if I learn anything, I definitely share and we've got quite a few friends who have older kids who've been to Baby Bounce, and they all say how good it is and highly recommended us going.' Parent interviewee

There is already evidence that First 5 Forever is benefitting from word of mouth and personal referrals from parents and caregivers, which will help strengthen the brand.

'I found out about the First 5 Forever [initiative] through a friend and Facebook.' Parent interviewee

In future evaluation phases data can be captured to measure parent and caregiver awareness of the First 5 Forever brand and which sources of information are most influential in encouraging them to engage.

'I already rang my girlfriend and told her when she gets back from holiday she needs to take her baby.' Parent interviewee

'Yes [I would recommend], great incentive for learning particularly for people who are not motivated at home.' Parent interviewee

Campaign element	Reach and engagement statistics
First 5 Forever website, from launch 1 November – 31 December 2015	8,432 sessions, 6,919 users, 13,894 page views. Usage of the site grew by approximately 187 visits per day in the first 2 months.
Mamamia advertorial, 8 December 2015 www.mamamia.com.au	28,389 page impressions Nearly 4 minutes average page view time Over 1,200 page shares 345 views of embedded video
Mamamia Digital Display Activity, 8 December 2015 – 15 January 2016	340,000+ page impressions Click through rate to First 5 Forever site of 251
Mamamia Facebook post	6,994 users engaging with the piece 783 likes, 158 shares, 87 comments
Mamamia eDM	14,065 opens, an open rate of 19.4%
Kidspot advertorial, 8 December 2015 (kidsport.com.au)	3,854 page views Average over 6 minutes page view time
Kidspot digital display activity, 8 December 2015	75,944 impressions Click through rate to First 5 Forever site of 102
Kidspot Facebook post	Reach of 27,477, including 174 likes, 104 shares, 30 comments
Cadreon digital display, 9 Dec 2015 – 23 Jan 2016	144,307 video views, completion rate of 74%, 474 clicks through to the First 5 Forever site
Boom video seeding 8–31 Dec 2015	251,943 impressions, 4,225 clicks
Outbrain video seeding	Over 2 million impressions and 2,837 clicks through to the First 5 Forever site
Four Facebook marketplace ads 24 November 2015 – 9 January 2016	Average reach across four ads: 21,751, average video views: 20,754, average click-throughs: 523, average likes: 31, average shares: 5
Three promoted posts on SLQ Facebook in November and December	Average reach across three posts: 22,942, average video views: 14,365, average likes: 75, average number of comments: 4, average shares: 21

A brand designed to be implemented flexibly at a local level while delivering cohesive messages



'Pop up' libraries helping to reach out to communities and raise awareness of First 5 Forever

Some libraries have invested in 'pop up' library resources and materials which both help raise awareness of the initiative while also engaging families outside the library building.

Some councils spent part of their funding allocation on marketing materials in addition to First 5 Forever postcards and information brochures, for example through press advertising and banners. Collectively this accounted for an estimated \$43,000 of spend in 2015.

A number of libraries successfully advertised First 5 Forever activities through Facebook and online.

'We have a very good Facebook page that we do a lot of posting on... We've also had radio ads, we've done things in the community that have given us a fair bit of attention.' Stakeholder interviewee

'On ... [the] Library events Facebook page, I share all the little things from First 5 Forever with all the little tips and tricks ... parents definitely are identifying with the First 5 Forever brand because they're going on there and some parents have commented to me how handy they've found that tips and tricks page.'

'We put [First 5 Forever content] that we do every week on [the library's webpage], and you know the mums love that. The kids love that, families love that, it's getting the word out there.' Stakeholder interviewee

The flexibility of implementing First 5 Forever meant that libraries could adapt their approach based on the profile of their communities.

'We have all of our First 5 Forever paraphernalia. Balloons work fantastic, kids just love balloons.' Stakeholder interviewee

'We actually have a lot of people who still cannot get internet service ... So for us, print media, TV and radio is still very important.' Stakeholder interviewee

Broadening the distribution channels

During the implementation consultation, there were some suggestions on how the brand and associated campaigns could be further developed through using different distribution channels and more state-wide investment. It was suggested that more centralised marketing would lead to efficiencies.

'We were wondering, and would like to put the question out there – TV and radio ads. Is that not something that State Library could, sort of, look at from the bigger picture?' Stakeholder interviewee

'We don't think that it's being publicised enough ... get the wider community aware of it and talking about it, rather than us having to every single time explain, 'Well, this is what it is,' and whatever, and no-one getting a reinforcement anywhere other than from us. Whereas if there was a big page ad or a television commercial, or something that just said, 'Guess what? This

is out there,' and just to stimulate, to put it in the average person's mindset ... so everyone isn't individually ... reinventing the wheel on a daily basis.' Stakeholder interview

One parent interviewee suggested that the First 5 Forever campaign could be more prominent in maternity hospital care, a recommendation that SLQ is already actively exploring, as summarised in the previous chapter.

'We got given a brochure at the hospital when we were having the baby ... maybe a brochure there about [First 5 Forever] would have been quite good.' Parent interviewee

'Cut-through' and implementation challenges

One of the key challenges faced by marketing First 5 Forever across the council network is a bureaucratic one, with brand guidelines at a local level sometimes constraining how First 5 Forever branding is applied. This challenge was anticipated, and flexibility was designed into marketing materials to help overcome this.

'The Council ... has just recently decided on a very uniform and central approach to branding. And up until now we've been able to pretty much give the First 5 Forever branding the top spot, and... make sure that it's highlighted. That could change, being part of the Council, because there are certainly questions being asked about 'why is our logo not first instead of First 5 Forever?'. Stakeholder interview

'Because there wasn't an SLQ marketing suite [initially], we had to go through a lot of processes through our corporate comms team ... there have been some challenges with doing that. Because of our... in-house policies and procedures.' Stakeholder interview

However, occasionally libraries felt that there was too much flexibility and that they would have benefited from more guidance in developing marketing materials.

'I think there could have been some more images and graphic suites for us to draw upon ... You know 'this is the template for a flyer, put your information on it.' Stakeholder interviewee

Some libraries also mentioned the problems of delayed access to First 5 Forever marketing content. It should be noted that dedicated marketing resource at SLQ was only introduced mid-way through 2016.

'First 5 Forever templates and marketing collateral were received in November 2015, 9 months after the commencement of the funding and six months after the coordinator and program officer began ... This has meant marketing the program to the target audience has not been optimal.' Council 2015 report

'I did find ... moving forward in branding, producing, doing that whole marketing side of things, that I was waiting for some of that branding to be available ... but as soon as it was, that's all rolled out now, and it's really good.' Stakeholder interviewee

Another challenge also relates to the competition faced by First 5 Forever, with occasional reports of legacy initiatives and alternative programs confounding First 5 Forever's implementation in some cases.

'In some communities there's been feedback that they can't really get on board with First 5 Forever because they're being told to follow other strategies ... like the Abecedarian approach.' Stakeholder interview

Raising the profile of emergent literacy within library services

As well as parents and caregivers, the First 5 Forever initiative is also successfully reaching and engaging cross-sector workers and wider library staff. Increased exposure has helped children and young people's library staff advocate for the importance of emergent literacy internally, giving them support to push for such services to be prioritised.

'It had sort of been bubbling around in the background without a direction, but with First 5 Forever it became a priority to make sure we were out there, and taking the mobile library, and getting memberships, so First 5 Forever

has definitely focused everybody and we haven't had to argue for the program, where [as] before, I think people were a bit ambivalent ... it suddenly became a priority ... all we have to say is, 'Well, it's part of our First 5 Forever program,' and that's where the conversation stops and people are on our side.' Stakeholder interview

'I feel like it's a much broader program and it needs to be everyone's program within the library service ... we also had our community engagement and our marketing staff attend [First 5 Forever training workshops] ... so that they were invested in what we were doing ... it really helped to ... inform everybody that it was everybody's priority. That it was a part of the library service and not just sort of one little section or one area and ... just everybody had a role to play in that.' Stakeholder interviewee

‘One of the [outcomes], thinking about the measures of First 5 Forever, is really going to be that ... confidence of libraries at the most senior levels ... of the value of children and literacy and families.’ Stakeholder interviewee

Reinforcing partnerships through publicity and shared content

First 5 Forever marketing activity is also clearly serving to reinforce partnerships. The quality of content provided means that cross-sector agencies can share First 5 Forever resources within their networks to the benefit of their service users. In addition, the reach of the brand has meant that some agencies have proactively sought out libraries with which to form partnerships.

‘The content that First 5 Forever put up on their web page is really high quality, and it actually saves us work as this is the type of activity we’d be doing anyway, so rather than replicate it we can use what they produce ... So we’ve made sure that Queensland Health follows the First 5 Forever Facebook page so that we can link into that and share content.’ Stakeholder interview

‘The nurses and the speech pathologist are actually seeking us out, where [as] I think without First 5 Forever, is we’ve been knocking on their [door] ... we attended [a conference] and we put up a stall for First 5 Forever, and we got lots of interest from different health sectors and different education sectors who wanted to know more about it.’ Stakeholder interview

Recommendations

- **Enhanced data capture.** In 2016 the evaluation data tools should be designed to capture how parents are finding out about First 5 Forever. This will provide evidence to help SLQ and the council network work out which marketing formats, in which contexts, have greater recall and influence.
- **Strategic investment in centralised marketing spend.** This evidence should also allow SLQ to monitor the impact of any centralised, state-wide marketing activity that takes place.

While it is important that libraries are able to personalise communications to suit their individual communities, it would be beneficial for SLQ to share clear guidelines around content. By supplying media templates and kits that are able to be adapted, libraries have the flexibility to meet local needs while ensuring messaging remains consistent with the overall First 5 Forever brand.

- **Review branding guidelines.** In the November 2016 council reporting round, councils are being asked to submit examples of marketing produced in-house. Once this content has been assessed, SLQ should consider updating the First 5 Forever marketing guidelines with a focus on branding which will increase consistency and strengthen the brand.

- **Continue inter-sector marketing to highlight common goals.** Although not a widespread issue, directly mapping First 5 Forever’s theory of change onto other initiatives and highlighting the synergies could help overcome any resistance from shifting away from legacy initiatives. The success of helping push emergent literacy up libraries’ agendas should be documented and celebrated as the initiative progresses.



Workforce capability & standards

First 5 Forever professional development activity has played a **key role in activating libraries**, engaging cross-sector staff, developing **best practice skills** across the network, encouraging **self-reflective practice** and sharing **emergent literacy theory and knowledge**.

Over **77% of councils engaged** in First 5 Forever workshops, forums or webinars in 2015, with sessions involving **569 participants from 151 discrete organisations**.

Aim and outcomes

Overarching strategy: Professional development and emergent literacy workshops for the regions.

Libraries are uniquely placed as they are a key community agency that can easily connect with other service providers and also provide services directly for children and families. The First 5 Forever team recognised this opportunity and through professional development workshops, they not only provided the latest evidence and strategies around emergent literacy, but the opportunity for key community partners to come together and action-plan, focussing specifically on families of children aged 0-5.

SLQ has used a collaborative, evidence-based approach to developing professional development content, delivered across the state, utilising the skills and expertise from a range of professionals. Councils have a requirement to enable staff to access professional development sessions, as set out in the Service Level Agreement.

The first phase of workshops, First 5 Forever Language to Literacy, promoted a method of engaging community partners, improving networks and relationships and included

facilitated action planning. It was designed to develop participants' skills, knowledge and confidence against the learning outcomes outlined in the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, specifically focusing on language and emergent literacy, whilst providing a simple framework for community engagement, messaging and media.

Evidence of First 5 Forever's impact towards raising standards

PD activity in 2015 at a glance:

569

participants engaged

17

discrete workshops took place in 13 locations across the state

77%

of councils engaged in First 5 Forever workshops, forums or webinars

The adjacent map details the locations where the workshops were delivered representing both metropolitan and regional locations.

Participants attended from the far reaches of the Torres Strait right across Queensland including the South East corner. Library and Indigenous Knowledge Centre staff alone represented 63% of participants from 54 different local government areas.

Delivery locations of Language to Literacy workshop #1



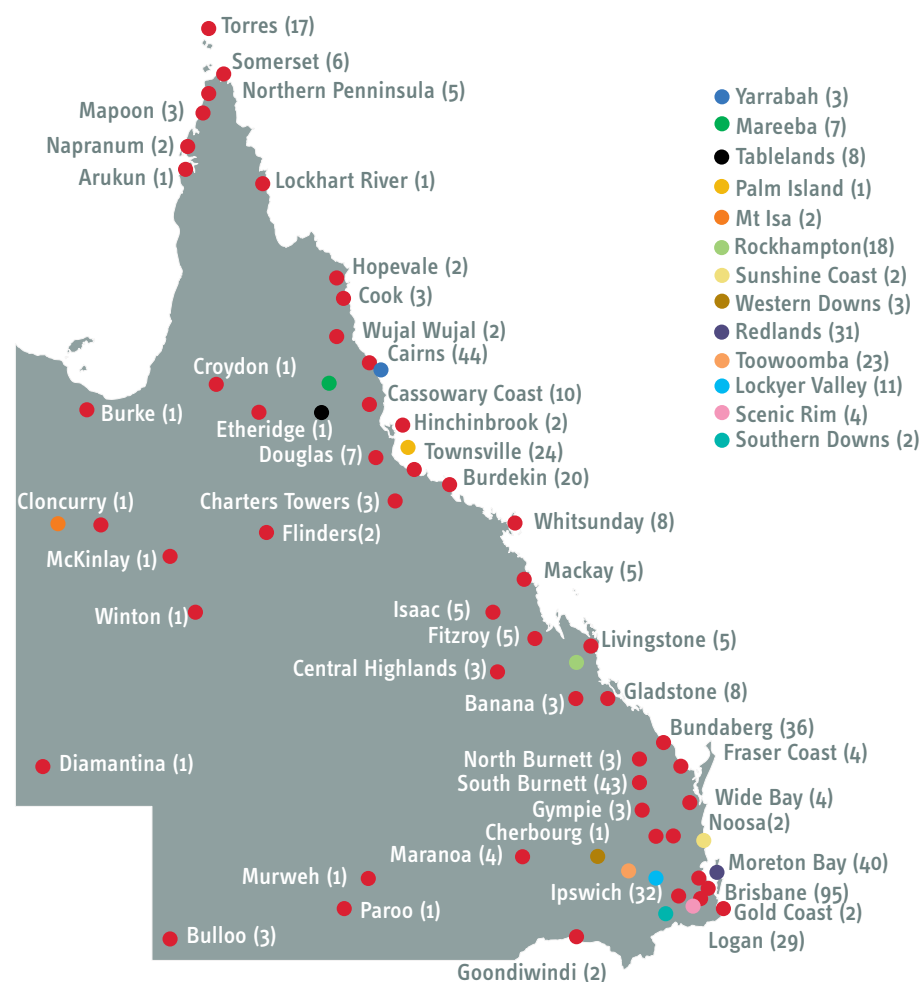
The second map to the right demonstrates the communities which library and Indigenous Knowledge Centre staff represented through attending the First 5 Forever Language to Literacy workshops. The figures in brackets represent the number of participants from each geographical area.

As these workshops included key community partners, 13% of participants (73) came from an Early Childhood Education and Care sector background with 5% representing education and 4% from Health. 7% of participants represented a Non-Government Organisation or other community organisation and 12 different Indigenous services outside of the Indigenous Knowledge Centre network attended.

The table overleaf highlights the range of backgrounds and agencies represented in the workshops.

For all 569 participants, 151 discrete councils, organisations and agencies attended the First 5 Forever Language to Literacy workshops in 2015.

Locations of council staff attending Language to Literacy workshop #1



Language to Literacy workshop #1 (1.5 days)

	Number of workshops
Community groups	6
Council project officers	16
Dept Comm	5
DET	31
ECEC	65
Health	24
IKC	21
Indigenous	12
NGO	33
Other	9
Playgroups	8
Libraries	337
Students	2
Total	569

Broad range of experience engaged

A broad range of experience has been captured in the professional development sessions in 2015¹; 1 in 5 (20%) participants had been in their role less than a year while, at the other end of the scale, a similar proportion (23%) had been in their role for over 10 years.

Attendees also brought a variety of working contexts to the session, with 42% working in metropolitan areas, 37% in regional areas, 21% in rural and 1% in remote areas.

Addressing the gaps in formal provision

13% of participants had received no prior training in early childhood development. 30% had attended workshops and professional development sessions on early childhood development in the past, and nearly 6 in 10 (58%) had received training on the job.

Workshops have received overwhelmingly positive feedback

As noted in the previous chapter ‘Increasing access to emergent literacy experiences’, there has been an overwhelmingly positive response to the professional development workshops.

All participants stated that they would recommend the workshops to others. In particular, participants praised the delivery style of the facilitators and the varied format:

‘Very clearly explained, paced, with good interaction.’

‘Dan and Kylie’s presentation, it was delivered in a positive and meaningful way. They engaged so well with all attending.’

Satisfaction with workshops

The session was clear and understandable



The instructors successfully communicated the topic



Session successfully met my learning expectations



I am satisfied with the session



Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

‘The group discussions, they helped us share ideas and voice issues and also how to communicate effectively with parents.’

The collaborative and interactive nature of the sessions and networking opportunities were also a highlight for many:

‘Interesting – informative, well presented. Good balance of participation / sharing ideas and delivery of content.’

‘Interactive nature of sharing information – meeting other contacts / networks. [The] enthusiasm of presenters, simplicity of the message of a very important issue.’

Empowering libraries with practical ways to deliver core messages

Feedback also supports the principle that strong learning outcomes and ‘connections’ to First 5 Forever’s key messages are being successfully delivered through the professional development program. Evidence suggests that participants often leave with practical action plans and a renewed understanding of how to implement the program:

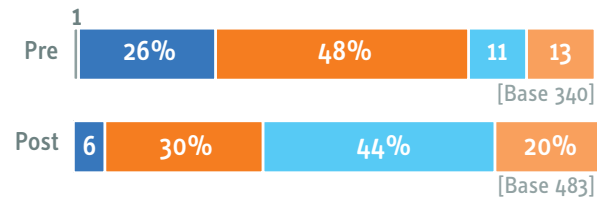
‘How changes can be made to enhance language and literacy. How to network and get the information out to families.’

100%

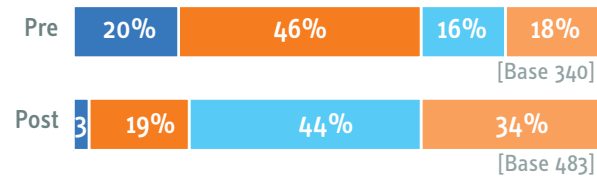
of participants would recommend the professional development workshops to others

First 5 Forever core domains pre and post workshop attendance

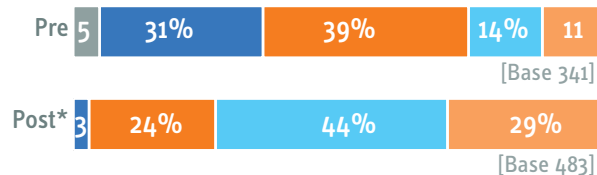
Knowledge of brain development in young children



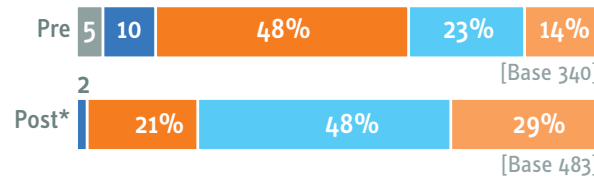
Knowledge of encouraging language development in children 0-5 years



Knowledge of emergent literacy (pre-literacy)



Skills in using this knowledge of language and emergent literacy development in your programs for children 0-5 years



Scale



*Post question was asked differently across the survey period

‘The opportunities to discuss after each part was very valuable as already I can see practical ways to improve.’

‘We loved gaining the knowledge to be able to incorporate this into our service.’

Increasing competence and skills through strong learning outcomes

Participants rated their experience and skills in core related domains immediately before and immediately after taking part in a session. The data shows an overall pattern of the professional development activity increasing competence and skills, with staff more confident in all domains post-attendance.

Long-term impacts and on-going demand

Library staff have noticed the increase in quality and capability among library workforces as a result of the First 5 Forever professional development program. Not only have sessions up-skilled participants, but they have also helped participants understand the program logic and First 5 Forever's theory of change, and enabled quality 'on-training' of the wider library workforce following participation.

'The professional development sessions and Webinar have been very valuable in providing information to help implement and understand the program ... We would like development sessions and webinars to be held at regular intervals so we can share our achievements and concerns and hear about the successes and problems from other First 5 Forever organisers.' Council 2015 report

'... The progress and growth in staff that we've seen since we actually did our first training session ... back in January [2015] is phenomenal. It's been amazing.' Stakeholder interviewee

'It's really just building capacity ... we had a lot of mentoring and shadowing. So where any new staff were delivering early childhood programs with someone who was experienced and then we made sure everyone had the opportunity to attend the First 5 Forever training at State Library as well.' Stakeholder interviewee

Recommendations

- **Consider strategies for meeting demand.** The high quality of the First 5 Forever professional development has resulted in some council and library staff suggesting that accessibility to this activity could be further increased – at both a geographical and management level. For example, one stakeholder suggested that developing a professional development session aimed directly at managers or senior staff responsible for staff delivering First

5 Forever programs on the ground would help internal buy-in at a senior level.

- **Enhance accessibility by digitising some content from the sessions.** Library staff also commented on how useful it would be for professional development content to be distributed across different platforms online, increasing reach and impact. Actioning this recommendation does, however, need careful consideration. Feedback has highlighted that a core benefit to attendance is the interactive and hands-on aspects of the sessions, networking and being able to actively apply the content amongst peers. Providing online content could reduce likelihood to attend in person. An alternative strategy could involve sharing of specific excerpts from the training, which highlights examples of best practice and communicates the benefits of attending in person. This would be a valuable resource for those unable to attend the trainings, while ensuring face-to-face attendance remains the preferred option.

¹ Data presented represents participants up to 30 November 2015, so as to be in line with Council reporting periods.



Backbone organisation: collective impact

As the central body establishing, coordinating and administering First 5 Forever, **SLQ** has been the **cornerstone of the initiative's successful implementation.**

Aim and outcomes

Overarching strategy: SLQ central funding, resources, guidance, support and evaluation.

SLQ has been responsible for establishing, coordinating and administering the initiative funding and deliverables and has played a key role in capturing data for baseline reporting and evaluation to date.

Evidence of SLQ's central role in implementing First 5 Forever

Delivering on core deliverables

With only a small team of less than three staff working full-time on the initiative in 2015, SLQ achieved significant milestones during the

implementation period. This is despite several unforeseen challenges that were outside of SLQ's control, including the public announcement of the initiative happening ahead of schedule in September 2014, and delays in the supply chain for First 5 Forever resources being delivered.

The table on the following page summarises level of activity against SLQ's core deliverables, drawing on data already presented elsewhere in this report.

State Library of Queensland: a convergence of disciplines

The central coordination provided by SLQ using high-level expertise and sector-endorsed, quality resources, provides reassurance across the council network and beyond that First 5 Forever will deliver and leverage consistent, high-quality emergent literacy practice.

SLQ has consistently recognised the value, and sought the inclusion of professional expertise and feedback from a wide variety of disciplines in the initial design of First 5 Forever, and the content, form and delivery of the strategies and resources that support the initiative.

'I think [Kylie has] been a really strong mover in making sure that [the First 5 Forever] standard's been really great.' Stakeholder interviewee

'SLQ has a pivotal role in providing guidance and training to people working directly with children.'

Professional development participant

Core deliverable	Key stats
Increasing access to emergent literacy experiences: More places at public programs including Baby, Toddler and Story Time sessions	<p>An estimated 17,399 library sessions for children under 5 years and their families in 2015, a 24% increase in the number of sessions held in 2014.</p> <p>In total there were nearly 445,000 attendances to First 5 Forever activities held within libraries in 2015, an increase of 41,000 on the previous year, equivalent of 10% growth.</p>
Reaching all families with children under 5: Outreach strategies and information toolkits for parents / caregivers of young children that support their role as their child's first educator	<p>Parent toolkit endorsed by several peak industry bodies.</p> <p>1,138 outreach sessions held in 2015, an estimated 339% increase on the number in 2014. The estimated number of participants engaged through these sessions nearly doubled to reach 38,500 which represented a 195% increase in attendance rates.</p> <p>18,982 toolkits distributed in July and November 2015 purchasing rounds, 115,439 additional First 5 Forever elements (buggy books, postcards, magnets etc.) were distributed over the same time period totalling 134,421 resources.</p>
Collaborative partnerships and coordination: Local steering or advisory groups and enabling library staff to partner with local early childhood sector workers to create consistent key messages and long-term strategies	<p>Approximately one-third of participating councils engaged in a reference group in 2015.</p> <p>625 community partners engaged by libraries through 2015 program delivery in 2015, 60% of which were new and attributed to First 5 Forever.</p>
Family and community awareness campaign: A state-wide awareness campaign aimed at parents and primary care-givers	<p>Dissemination of visual identity and promotional collateral for use at council level in November 2015.</p> <p>8,432 sessions, 6,919 users, 13,894 page views in the first two months of the First 5 Forever website going live.</p> <p>Nearly \$200,000 spent by SLQ on state-wide launch campaign. Campaign activity across multiple platforms with higher than sector-average engagement across the board¹. Please see page 43 for more detail of specific campaign elements.</p>
Workforce capability and standards: Professional development and emergent literacy workshops for the regions	<p>In 2015, the First 5 Forever team provided workshops to 569 participants delivered through 17 discrete workshops in 13 locations across the state. 100% of workshop participants would recommend the workshops to others.</p>
Backbone organisation: collective impact initiative: SLQ central funding, resources, guidance, support and evaluation	<p>\$4.5m of funding and support made available to 71 councils in 2015. 42 of 56 participating councils submitted acquittals, representing approximately 98% of the Queensland population.</p> <p>SLQ has designed and implemented data capture tools used at workshops and professional development sessions during the implementation period with over 800 surveys completed by participants.</p>

‘One thing I haven’t congratulated SLQ on is their support when we’ve needed it. So I really think that that needs to be highlighted ...when I’ve needed some help and advice [from] the team, they’ve been there for us. And I really also just love the fact that ... Kylie’s coming from a speech pathology background, she has a wealth of knowledge, and we can ask questions.’ Stakeholder interviewee

A model that works at a local level

SLQ acknowledges that councils know their communities best and should have a say in how their allocated funding is spent. The resulting flexibility at a local level is highly valued by participating libraries.

‘I really like the fact that we’re given a set amount of autonomy to do what we want to do, without a lot of interference from State Library. And I like

the fact that if we need to ring them up about something we can, but on the whole, they just let us do our thing ... they monitor what we do, they’re all looking at Facebook pages and things that we send in. So the staff in the First 5 Forever office are aware of what’s going on around the place. But I like the fact that we’re not constantly having to ring them up and say “can we do this, can we do that?”. It makes it a lot easier for us.’ Stakeholder interviewee

‘I think the reason there has been such good buy in from libraries and communities with First 5 Forever has been the role Dan and Kylie have played. They are both enthusiastic and knowledgeable whilst always reinforcing that the people from each community know and understand their own community better than anyone else.’ Stakeholder interviewee

‘[A success factor is] Autonomy to deliver the program made possible by Government funding and the vehicle, staffing and resources required to support this.’ Council 205 report

Implementation requires clarity and takes time

The level of agency granted to councils was praised by many of those consulted, although the model comes with its complications. A key example relates to spend, with some councils using First 5 Forever funding to purchase goods and services that are outside the parameters specified in the Service Level Agreement, such as independent evaluations and buying and servicing vehicles outright.

There were mixed perceptions of the level of flexibility present within the Service Level Agreement. Occasionally council staff consulted described finding it hard to ‘know where to start’ when first implementing First 5 Forever and there was confusion about knowing what was in or out of spending scope. Some would have welcomed a greater level of direction. Others, however, felt that the agreement set out clear levels of accountability.

‘There are a lot of guidelines ..., I’d say there are more restrictions than freedom, which is fair enough, because there’s got to be accountability, and there [are] a few things that we think, ‘Oh, we’d love to do that,’ but it doesn’t fit in the guidelines, so we can’t do that, but I think the overall model of SLQ giving it out to the council has been terrific.’ Stakeholder interviewee

‘I get what they’re doing ... they don’t want to prescribe everything to everyone, but on the other hand, you feel as if you’re just, not floundering, but you’re not always given a lot of direction.’ Stakeholder interviewee



‘There’s been a little bit of, for us in particular, confusion about what the role of the First 5 Forever officer is. And how they sit within State Library group and our group.’ Stakeholder interviewee

First 5 Forever is striving towards a ‘cultural shift’ within councils and their staff, leading to the prioritisation of emergent literacy for families. It will naturally take time for the importance of the emergent literacy message and the role libraries play to be fully understood and advocated for internally, in order to create full organisational support for the First 5 Forever initiative.

Facilitating inter-library conversations and knowledge-sharing

Although knowledge sharing has been instigated independently at a library level, many library staff look to SLQ to facilitate this.

‘Since starting First 5 Forever, we’ve partnered with [other libraries from other councils]... to discuss what we’ve been doing and what’s working well ... and even just sharing ideas for outreach.’ Stakeholder interviewee

‘I’d love to talk to the supervisors to find out what the solutions have been and what the problems have been [managing First 5 Forever Officers].’ Stakeholder interviewee

‘Wouldn’t it be great if those people had a whole pool of resources or visual resources that they could tap into to improve their practice based on seeing good practitioners? ... I think it’s SLQ’s role to collate it ... We hear there are great things happening ... so if someone could film it and put it up there, and then we could look at it and just assess, ‘Oh, look what they do. Oh, that’s great.’ Stakeholder interview

Working towards a sustainable model

The sustainability of the initiative is of concern to some libraries involved and there is obvious passion and will for First 5 Forever to continue beyond the proposed four years.

‘The First 5 Forever brand is becoming so strong and well defined ... I have that concern that we’ve had the funding to increase what we do quite a lot ... then that funding stops ... what are the Council’s expectations?’ Stakeholder interviewee

‘Everyone worries that the funding is going to end at some point.’ Stakeholder interviewee

‘Both [my First 5 Forever co-ordinator] and I are really passionate about our role and we love it. We just hope that it won’t get slipped under the carpet after three years’ Stakeholder interviewee

Some libraries have been strategically considering sustainability throughout their implementation, seeing the opportunities that partnerships present for taking the program forward if funding is not continued beyond 2018. Others emphasised the need for robust data to help evidence the impact of First 5 Forever and, in doing so, secure future financial support.

‘If the money is there and we can grow the program and demonstrate the importance of it and the difference that it’s making, then again that’ll go towards making the program viable after the funding is gone, if we could demonstrate the impact that it’s had, it’s going to make further funding, external funding, a bit easier ... Or more justified.’ Stakeholder interviewee

'Building sustainability into [the program] will happen with this [reference group]. Because if we can get a bit of momentum on that, a bit of joint, shared understanding on where we're going. That's something we can carry on when the funding money runs out.' Stakeholder interviewee

'Continuation of it at the end of this funding period has been an area that I need to consider and think about how we ... progress with that.' Stakeholder interviewee

Already First 5 Forever is being seen as an innovative model that could be implemented elsewhere.

'In a recent review of Speech Pathology Australia's 3 year strategic plan, we identified a need to foster and develop population-level universal programs that will enhance children's speech, language and communication abilities in their early years. The First 5 Forever program in Queensland is an excellent example of such an approach, and Speech Pathology Australia hopes to foster similar programs in other states' Stakeholder interviewee

Recommendations

- **Capture practical learnings from the implementation period.** A learning that could feed into the implementation of future similar programs is that some libraries, particularly those with more limited staff and provision in rural areas, would benefit from stronger guidance at a bureaucratic level. An example of this could be developing and circulating a 'competency framework' detailing specific competencies that are required to deliver First 5 Forever to inform planning, training and HR activity.
- **Consider increasing SLQ full-time staff resourcing for the initiative.** Evidence presented throughout this report has demonstrated substantial achievements and growing momentum of the First 5 Forever initiative, despite perceptions from some library staff that the core First 5 Forever team are overstretched. SLQ should consider allocating more dedicated staffing resource, ensuring that momentum is maintained and that demand for their guidance and expertise can be met.
- **Increase strategic use of platforms to share best practice and inter-library experiences.** Increase strategic use of platforms, like the PLConnect blog, Facebook professional group page, e-news for library staff and online webinars. Importantly all these platforms have an SLQ moderated functionality, meaning that content can be presented and communicated in a way that aligns to the program logic and strengthens communication of cohesive, quality messaging.
- **Review the Service Level Agreement.** SLQ should consider tightening the requirements of the Service Level Agreement relating to how councils spend their funding. The resulting decrease in flexibility at a council-level could be mitigated by SLQ having different 'levels' of guidance based on the size of funds, acknowledging that a council receiving under \$1k, for example, would have very different needs and spending capacity than those councils receiving the largest amounts of money. Geographical constraints and level of remote communities should also be factored in here, taking into account the catchment area size of each council.

- **Review the timing and frequency of council reporting.** Reporting at the end of the calendar year can pose problems for councils due to competing pressures and staff holidays over the summer period. Although it will be important to maintain consistency in reporting periods (year ending November 30), SLQ could consider giving councils longer to compile and supply data. To mitigate the impact of extending reporting periods – which are required ahead of annual funding distribution – SLQ should consider bi-annual or quarterly reporting rounds which would lead to more transparency on council activities across the year.
- **Produce more tools to help monitor council application of the funds.** In addition to council acquittal data, SLQ could consider introducing guidelines to help each council interpret the SLA. These guidelines could incorporate quality indicators for programming emergent literacy and should be designed to be communicated across all levels of council.

¹ First 5 Forever Post Campaign Report
November 2015 – January 2016, BCM.

- **Continue celebrating the collective impact model and its achievements to date.** SLQ should continue embedding evidence of First 5 Forever’s impact strategically and start to address emerging questions about the lifespan of the program. If appropriate, SLQ should encourage councils to begin thinking about models of sustainability in 2017 and beyond.



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Research parameters

This study was carried out for the State Library of Queensland by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre.

It was commissioned in September 2016.

The implementation phase evaluation was drawn from the following data sources.

Information provided by 50 councils detailing First 5 Forever activity February - November 2015. This data was self-reported by councils using an acquittal form designed by SLQ. Provision of this data forms a requirement of the SLA and was submitted in late 2015 / early 2016.

Consultation interviews with 15 key stakeholders which took place in October - November 2016, mostly over the phone and using a list of contacts supplied by SLQ.

Interviews with 10 parents and caregivers

who had engaged with First 5 Forever in a range of different ways since the initiative launched. Interviews were mostly conducted over the phone and took place October - November 2016. Participants were recruited through lists of people who had indicated they were happy to take part in further research.

Survey responses from participants of

professional development workshops, using a self-completion form designed by SLQ. Responses were gathered immediately before and after the sessions. Data within this report represents participants who attended sessions between March and November 2015.

Secondary sources of information collated internally by SLQ including professional development participation, First 5 Forever materials purchasing data, Google Analytics and media monitoring data.



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Morris Hargreaves McIntyre is an award-winning arts management consultancy. We use consumer insight to help organisations transform their relationships with audiences.

We are passionate about understanding cultural consumers, getting to the heart of issues that matter to you and making practical recommendations.

All projects are different, but the value we add is constant: we measure our success by the impact we have on organisations we work with.

‘After going to Baby Bounce and learning the nursery rhymes, it’s now integrated into her day. When she’s just sitting there and wanting something to do we’ll sit down and sing to her and do actions.’

Parent interviewee