



Summary of Annual Reporting 1 July 2022 - 30 June 2023

First 5 Forever is an initiative of the Queensland Government, coordinated by State Library of Queensland and delivered in partnership with local government.

Since launching in 2015, First 5 Forever has been successful in highlighting the significance of public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs) as important and trusted sources of early literacy support and play-based learning. Through First 5 Forever parents and caregivers are supported in their role in developing their child's health and wellbeing.

With the pandemic firmly in the past, this reporting period shows significant growth across the state including an impressive 71% increase in attendance and 17% increase in program offerings from the previous financial year.

This report provides a snapshot of the deliverables for First 5 Forever and highlights the trends and progress of the program across Queensland.

At a glance 2022-2023

75 public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres providing services in Queensland participated in First 5 Forever

779,743 attendances at First 5 Forever - a 71% increase YoY; 17% increase in programs

3468 outreach activities – a 49% increase YoY

2496 partnership sessions - an 11% increase YoY

1,278 attendances at professional development

11 workshops, 4 webinars and 4 online modules

17,553 Facebook followers

108,257 page views of the First 5 Forever website

Approx 14,558 eDM subscribers – 1085% increase since 2021-22

24,583 in-library First 5 Forever sessions were facilitated with 545,895 attendances – a 16% increase in onsite programs and a 31% increase in attendances YoY

Reaching All Queensland Families

In 2022-2023 **28,970** First 5 Forever sessions were delivered by the public library network, with **24,583** sessions onsite and **3,468** offsite. A total of **779,743** attendances were reported, an increase of **17%** in the number of sessions delivered in the 2021-2022 reporting period and **71%** increase in onsite attendances from the same period. Offsite programming saw a **40%** increase in sessions and a **69%** increase in attendance from the 2021-2022 reporting period, demonstrating councils' commitment to increasing access for families.

This can be attributed to councils increasing in-person library session delivery, meeting the demands of families preferring a face-to-face program experience. As a result, we continue to see a decrease in online delivery with **298** sessions and **18,203** participants (across 7 councils) dropping **41%** against the 2021-2022 reporting period of **2464** sessions and **30,982** participants. The councils delivering the most online sessions were Aurukun, Central Highlands, Fraser Coast and Sunshine Coast. The remoteness or vastness of these areas may be factors contributing to families accessing in-library services.

The 2022-2023 reporting period saw libraries expanding their offsite and outreach activities. This enabled library staff to continue to be flexible as they welcomed families to the library, or to community spaces including halls, parks and swimming pools. Innovative and diverse approaches to First 5 Forever programs are reported as libraries prioritise inclusion and play based experiences, both on and offsite. Libraries continue to prioritise building new partnerships and strengthening existing ones to meet the needs and interests of their communities, as evidenced by these highlights:

Gold Coast: Gold Coast libraries First 5 Forever donated 1200 books to children under 5 affected by family violence through a partnership with RizeUp and Wesley Kids.

Hinchinbrook: First 5 Forever Underwater Wonderland Baby Welcoming Ceremony welcomed 42 babies into the shire, providing a wonderful opportunity to welcome families with new babies and introduce families to other activities such as Sensory Storytime and Playtime.

Mackay: First 5 Forever has created a Memorandum of Understanding with Hope in a Suitcase to provide preloved books for vulnerable families. This is helping to increase reach to vulnerable families.

Moreton Bay: First 5 Forever delivered sessions in caravan parks and homeless shelters, and partnered with local police, support agencies and groups (73) to ensure vulnerable children have access to sessions and resources. Moreton Bay Libraries reported increases in physical visitation, collection usage and memberships in addition to valuable outreach as part of First 5 Forever to families in homeless shelters and caravan parks.

Fraser Coast: First 5 Forever employed two casual staff members to lead an increase in outreach programming with local playgroups, childcare centres, sessions at the Pier, monthly sessions at Bunnings, and an increase in the frequency of pop ups in parks.

Other community programs and partnerships:

- Benevolent Society
- Bush Kindy (Brisbane)
- Bunnings (Fraser Coast)
- BUMP mentoring program (Logan)
- Bulkaway Muruku -Yarning and Song (Cairns)
- Child Health Services
- Early Learning Centres
- Local cafes and shopping centres
- Play Matters
- Qld Ballet Story Time (Brisbane)
- TAFE (Cairns)
- Tui n Friends Samoan Rhyme Time (Logan)
- Primary and High Schools (Toowoomba – engaging students studying ECEC)
- Under the Sea Adventures at Sea Life (Sunshine Coast)
- Wattlewood Nature Play, Wildlife Whitsundays, Yooribaya Cultural Experiences and Children's Discovery (Whitsunday)

Other outreach activities across Queensland include:

- Welcoming Baby ceremonies
- Pop up/mobile libraries
- Under 5s and Under 8s Days
- Community and cultural celebrations

Diversity of programs:

- Kids Yoga in the park
- STEAM Storytime
- Dads n Bubs sessions
- Jarjum Stories
- Water play and messy play events
- Multicultural story times
- Auslan/signed story times
- Walk with Me 4 Autism Walk (Bundaberg)
- Rewards programs
- Stay and Play boxes (Redlands)
- First Nations Story Time (Livingstone)

Community engagement projects:

- Bringing Stories to Life storyboards (Flinders)
- Inclusive Story Time (Hinchinbrook)
- Outdoor play space (Charters Towers)
- Frog Squad at the Splash Pade (Logan)
- Stay and Play sensory play space (Townsville)
- Story walks: Tales and Trails (Ipswich); Shoosh (Gympie)
- Story in a Box (Ipswich)
- Space Exhibition – Bundaberg, Childers, Gin Gin Learning Through English Storytime (LETS program – Cairns)

Marketing activity:

- When Men Read (Gold Coast) - Winner of the 2023 LGx Awards for Excellence in Local Government Communications - Best communications (external)
- Bus wraps; magazines cinema advertising, literacy calendar (Cairns)

Building Capability

In the 2022-2023 reporting period, Councils demonstrate a continued commitment to staff training with **1,278** attendances at professional development opportunities offered by State Library of Queensland through a mix of face-to-face workshops (11), webinars (4) and online modules (4).

Councils also report engaging external training providers such as Tribalink, Connecting the Dots Through Culture, Nadia Sunde, Pathways to Resilience (to equip front line workers to better support families with young children), and Circle of Security Parenting (COSP) Facilitator training. These connections enable a deeper understanding of the needs of the whole child, placing children at the centre of the work libraries do.

Elevating First Nations

In the 2022-2023 reporting period, Councils demonstrate a commitment to First Nations programming, resourcing, partnerships that increase access, and event participation to increase reach and raise awareness of First 5 Forever, as evidenced by these highlights:

Aurukun: First 5 Forever participated in community programs such as Easter egg hunt, Under 8s week, International Women's Day and Aurukun day.

Brisbane: Jarjum stories continue to be delivered as a monthly storytime at 4 libraries across the city: Bracken Ridge Library, Wynnum Library, Brisbane Square Library and Sunnybank Hills Library. The purpose of Jarjum Storytime is to highlight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors and illustrators and to use First Nation's picture books as part of our Reconciliation journey.

Gold Coast: First 5 Forever donated 1200 books to children under 5 affected by family violence through a partnership with RizeUp and Wesley Kids.

Hinchinbrook: First 5 Forever Underwater Wonderland Baby Welcoming Ceremony welcomed 42 babies into the shire, providing a wonderful opportunity to welcome families with new babies and introduce families to other activities such as Sensory Storytime and Playtime.

Livingstone: First Nations Storytimes have been an excellent addition to the existing and regular First 5 Forever program schedule. The resources provided by State Library are really top quality and have been well received at the events we have held recently. Our staff have really enjoyed sharing these resources at the special First Nations Storytimes in-library and in parks.

Logan: The First 5 Forever outreach team continues to receive Traditional Owner and Elder mentoring. The First 5 Forever outreach team proudly wear the First 5 Forever custom artwork shirts titled Nyurramba Garran – meaning “all come” or “everyone come” – reflecting the program's four pillars: Talk, Read, Sing and Play.

Moreton Bay: First 5 Forever delivered sessions in caravan parks and homeless shelters and partnered with local police and support agencies and groups (73) to ensure that vulnerable children have access to sessions and resources. Moreton Bay Libraries reported increases in physical visitation, collection usage and memberships in addition to valuable outreach as part of First 5 Forever to families in homeless shelters and caravan parks.

Sunshine Coast: 1,020 First 5 Forever promotional toolkits featuring the title Backyard Bugs by Dr Helen Milroy were handed out. Libraries formed valuable partnerships with North Coast Aboriginal Corporation, Queensland Health and Jabba Jabba First Nations child health department. These groups were provided with kits to distribute to their clientele, including many vulnerable families.

Sunshine Coast: Libraries attended a First Nations Family Fun Day which provided the opportunity to engage with local First Nations families and allowed the community to learn about local Indigenous culture. Libraries created a pop-up stand using the outreach van. 360 people engaged with Libraries on the day and staff joined 10 new members.

Toowoomba: Toowoomba Libraries purchased First Nations resources for each branch including playtime resources and promotional material for greater visibility, including library bags and book giveaways.

Whitsunday: First 5 Forever partnered with Wattlewood Nature Play, Wildlife Whitsundays, Yooribaya Cultural Experiences and Children's Discovery to deliver diverse programming.

Challenges:

Throughout the 2022-2023 reporting period a common challenge for libraries was staffing and interruptions to regular program delivery and outreach participation due to high attrition rates/illness/lack of backfill opportunities; and time spent training and inducting new staff.

Adverse weather was also a common challenge for libraries delivering offsite programs and outreach event delivery. Specifically, service delivery was impacted by flooding in Northern and Central Queensland in 2022.

Additionally, some libraries reported that meeting increasing customer demand and demand for outreach participation was challenging, and that increased attendance overwhelmed smaller library spaces.