

**Debra Rosenfeldt**

**A nation of readers – are we there yet?  
National Year of Reading closing event  
VRT, State Library of Victoria**

**10.30 am – 2.30 pm, Friday 14 February 2012**

**SPEECH NOTES**

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**[SLIDE 1: Title slide]**

Good morning everyone.

It is my privilege and my pleasure to share with you some of the exciting activities run by the State Library of Victoria for the National Year of Reading.

**[SLIDE 2: National programs]**

In our role as a founding partner, the State Library began the year by supporting the roll-out of a number of national programs.

The Library coordinated the Victorian element of Our Story, the national adult reading program.

Our Centre for Youth Literature partnered with Spine Out and Madman Entertainment as national coordinators of Read This, the national teen reading program.

Both programs were embraced by Victorians who read and voted on the Victorian books for Our Story, and submitted some

wonderfully creative reading recommendations to the Read This competition.

### **[SLIDE 3: Victorian launch events – Official launch]**

On 14 February, the State Library and Public Libraries Victoria Network hosted the official Victorian launch event for the National Year of Reading, which I know quite a few of you attended.

The official launch by the Premier of Victoria was attended by 260 reading and literacy professionals.

Bernard Salt gave a lively insight into the state of literacy in Victoria.

International guest speaker Henk Kraima showcased the Netherlands' successful reading promotion partnership that brings together booksellers, publishers and libraries.

Henk went on to inspire attendees at regional launch events hosted by Victorian public libraries.

### **[SLIDE 4: Victorian launch events – Mad Hatter's Tea Party]**

The launch celebrations continued with a Mad Hatter's tea party at the State Library for 180 lucky ticket winners.

ABC Radio 774 was closely involved with this event. Noni Hazelhurst gave away tickets live on air, and reporter Richelle Hunt was our Alice in Wonderland.

Partygoers dressed as their favourite book characters – here you can see Thing 1 and Thing 2 from *The Cat in the Hat*, Harry Potter, and a whole family of Magic Faraway Tree fans. Everyone enjoyed literary themed food, musical entertainment, and storytelling by Andy Griffiths, Graeme Base, Alice Pung and Wendy Orr.

### **[SLIDE 5: Statewide programs – High Road to Reading]**

In addition to our involvement in the national programs and launch events, the State Library funded and coordinated a series of statewide programs, in collaboration with Victorian public libraries.

High Road to Reading brought authors to Victorian public libraries, schools and other community settings for talks, readings and workshops.

2,500 enthusiastic adults and children met their favourite authors at 55 events across the state. The program was generously supported by the Copyright Agency Fund.

Here are just a few of the wonderful line-up of authors who took part in High Road to Reading.

[Note: the authors pictured are, from left to right, top to bottom:

Lia Hills - Scot Gardner - Elizabeth Honey - Archie Fusillo - Lee Fox - Shane Maloney  
Andy Griffiths - Barry Heard - Michael Wagner - Michael Hyde - Ursula Dubosarsky -  
Andrew Rule]

The program was a great success with libraries, authors and the public, and we're currently drawing up an even bigger calendar of events for High Road to Reading 2013.

**[SLIDE 6: Statewide programs – Writes of Spring]**

Writes of Spring was a creative writing competition that celebrated the diversity of our community during the National Year of Reading.

The competition encouraged Victorians of all ages to present a story on a postcard, inspired by a vibrant illustration by local artist Belinda Suzette.

An extraordinary 2,400 stories were received from entrants aged 2 to 91. Here you can see a sample of the winning entries, which include funny and heartfelt stories, poems, Chinese calligraphy, beautiful illustrations and beaded collages.

More than 40 public library staff had a challenging task selecting 35 winners.

The winning entries have been published in a book which we're delighted to be formally launching here today. Copies of the book are now on their way to the collection of every public library in Victoria. The winners have just been announced today on the State Library's website, and all the winning entries can be seen on our Flickr page. So head into your local library – or have a look online – to enjoy some great stories from our very creative community.

## **[SLIDE 7: Statewide programs – Poetry Slam]**

Poetry Slam was another lively statewide program run by the State Library in partnership with Victorian public libraries. In a Poetry Slam competition, performers have 2 minutes to perform their own poem to a live and interactive audience.

Victorian heats were hosted by public libraries in Brunswick, Swan Hill, Frankston, Croydon, Ballarat and Castlemaine. The final here at the State Library attracted a full house to cheer on 12 poets. At the end of the night, Freya Dougan-Whaite took home the top prize with her witty poem about a potato! Here's our new state champion in action.

## **[SLIDE 8: Other programs – Children's Book Festival & Look!]**

As well as the statewide public library programs, the State Library delivered a wide range of reading and literacy-themed events as part of the National Year of Reading.

In March, we partnered with the Wheeler Centre to run our second Children's Book Festival. Attracting 13,000 young readers and their families, the Festival was even bigger and better than last year, with guest authors, illustrators, performers, workshops, book-making and storytelling.

The National Year of Reading was the perfect time to launch a national tour of our popular exhibition, 'Look: the art of Australian picture books today', which has been seen by over 60,000 visitors so far.

The exhibition is currently in New South Wales and will return to Victoria in February through April, at the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery.

**[SLIDE 9: Other programs – Reader development & CYL ]**

Of course, promoting reading and literacy is part of what we do every day at the State Library. Our major events were complemented by our hugely popular programs for young readers, including baby bounce and story time sessions, school programs, and holiday activities. With 100 families regularly attending story time sessions, the pram parking alone is a major logistical achievement.

The Centre for Youth Literature promotes reading for pleasure for all young people and is internationally recognised for its role as a champion of youth literature. CYL came of age with its 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in 2012. It celebrated this milestone with a packed program of events for young people, teachers, librarians and other YA enthusiasts.

Our CYL and education teams are actively involved in a wide range of literacy initiatives, including community publishing and outreach programs for marginalised young people.

The demand for reading and literacy services for children and young adults is growing exponentially, and the State Library will continue to expand our services in these areas.

## **[SLIDE 10: Other programs – Lectures, PD, MyLanguage]**

During the National Year of Reading, the State Library's lectures and professional development seminars had a reading and literacy focus.

The 2012 Redmond Barry Lecture was delivered by Ramona Koval, who is well known to the literary world as the former host of Radio National's The Book Show.

Our professional development programs for library staff, teachers and literacy specialists included seminars on creative approaches to teen and adult literacy, and the Reading Matters conference on youth literature.

The State Library continued to provide multilingual literacy resources through the MyLanguage website, which is managed by the State Library of Victoria in partnership with eight state and territory libraries.

## **[SLIDE 11: National Year of Reading logo]**

At the National Year of Reading launch in February, I quoted a great philosopher of the modern age – John Lennon.

“A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together is reality.”

This year, it has been a great pleasure to work with others who share the dream of building a nation of readers.

The National Year of Reading has brought new opportunities for the State Library to support our colleagues in public libraries, to partner with other cultural organisations, to work with writers, poets and illustrators, and to engage with teachers and literacy specialists.

Most importantly, we have connected with thousands of Victorians to help instil, nurture and celebrate the joy of reading.

We look forward to building on these relationships and continuing to work together to make our shared dream a reality.