

A photograph of five children sitting on a grey sofa in a library, reading books. The background features bookshelves filled with books, a 'Suggestion Box', and various educational posters on the wall. The scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue and purple gradient.

IMPACT STUDY 2021

DYMOCKS CHILDREN'S CHARITIES

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Note: all photos used are real beneficiaries of DCC's programs.

01. OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Dymocks Children's Charities (DCC) is an independent, Australia-wide charity with a mission *to promote a love of reading and improve literacy outcomes for children in Australia*. By providing new books to children in priority locations around Australia, DCC seeks to ensure more children have access to good books so they can do well in school and lead healthier and happier lives.

Social Impact Hub were engaged to help DCC better understand how to measure the outcomes of their programs and study their impact to date. The study was not intended or designed to establish causal links between DCC programs and literacy improvements, rather to better understand whether and how they were contributing to the broader set of initiatives that focus on improving children's literacy.

Three phases of work were completed:

1. A literature review to inform a theory of change, golden thread and impact measurement framework.
2. Development of a Theory of Change (ToC), golden thread and impact measurement framework, with relevant outcomes to demonstrate impact.
3. Application of the measurement framework to prepare a summary impact report on DCC's programs.

The project was undertaken with consideration to DCCs' overall objectives for its programs:

DCC PROGRAMS' OVERALL OBJECTIVES



METHODOLOGY

In the development of this report, the following methodology was used:

PHASE 1

- **1.1 Conduct a small-scale literature review** to inform understandings of the outcomes and impacts that access to books has on children.
- **1.2 Apply insights** from this research to inform the development of a Theory of Change, Golden Thread and Impact Framework for DCC.

PHASE 2

2.1 Develop a Theory of Change and Golden Thread to:

- Establish the ground-work for meaningful ongoing impact measurement;
- Identify the levers for change and casual links between inputs, outcomes and impact;
- Increase transparency and understandings around impact;
- Help develop insights for external messaging to promote DCC's work, secure funding, and build relationships with stakeholders.

2.3 Develop an impact framework:

- Determine what systems are already in place to understand and measure outcomes;
- Identify and define the outcomes which should be measured;
- Determine the relevant indicators and measures for those outcomes ('ways of knowing'); and
- Determine quantitative and qualitative methods to apply to measure the indicators of outcomes.

PHASE 3

3.1 Apply impact framework and collect outcomes data:

- Survey development to measure outcomes quantitatively;
- Conduct 5 stakeholder interviews to capture qualitative insights.

3.2 Prepare short impact report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project commenced in November 2020 with a literature review of recent research and publications in respect of the efficacy of children's reading programs. Informed by the literature review findings, a Theory of Change (ToC) and accompanying Measurement framework were drafted and finalised for all three DCC book programs by the end of January 2021. This provided an agreement on the overall aims of the DCC programs alongside a set of outcomes for testing and verification through consultation with stakeholders that would inform the impact report.

The review of recent research into similar book programs gave pointers to inform the Theory of Change which identified a set of expected longer term outcomes for four key stakeholder groups – children, schools and library staff, partners, and parents/carers. Within the constraints of time and circumstance it was decided to concentrate on children and schools in terms of measuring benefits.

To capture data for the impact report, a survey for participating schools was drafted, finalised, and sent out in April 2021 to **403** recipients:

- **Library Regeneration Program:** **349** schools contacted
- **Book Bank Program:** **14** schools contacted
- **Read at Home Program:** **40** schools contacted

The survey received a total of **140** responses from beneficiaries of the three programs, representing an average response rate of **34%**. The survey responses were supplemented with staff interviews from five schools with diverse backgrounds in terms of size, geography and enrolment profile. Overall, the aggregated findings of the report were positive, demonstrating that DCC are making good progress at demonstrating the desired outcomes and impact outlined in the Theory of Change and golden thread. The report also identified areas where DCC can build on this success in the future to maximise their impact for the stakeholders they serve.





KEY FINDINGS

- 1** DCC's programs are overwhelmingly well received and considered to be adding real value to both children and schools. All programs received very positive Net Promoter Scores of **85** or higher.
- 2** There is clear evidence the DCC programs are making significant contributions to improvements in both student reading and writing as well as personal and social skills. **100%** of survey respondents believe the programs have contributed to some degree to these attributes outlined in DCC's Theory of Change.
- 3** Schools are experiencing important uplifts in the quality of their library and literacy services with **99%** of teachers engaged believing the programs have contributed to an increase in student reading frequency and enthusiasm for reading.
- 4** During COVID-19, The Read at Home scheme has enabled critical and positive interventions to support children experiencing specific and difficult challenges.

02. ARTICULATING IMPACT

LITERATURE REVIEW: INSIGHTS

We conducted a high level literature review of recent research in the field of literacy and reading programs to develop a better understanding of the potential benefits that access to books can have on children. Other programs were also examined internationally, not for comparative purposes, but as an opportunity to learn how their approaches could offer learnings to DCC.

Literature Review

Programs Reviewed:



Story Starters



See appendices for literature sources reviewed.

Insights

The review uncovered evidence that improved access to books can achieve a number of benefits:

- 1 Increased reading engagement leads to more positive attitudes to reading (Guthrie & Alvermann, 1999).
- 2 It also generates increased reading attainment and writing ability (OECD, 2000), greater creativity and imagination (BOP Consulting, 2015) and improved communication skills (BOP Consulting, 2015).
- 3 Increased reading engagement can impact positively on a range of outcomes for individuals across 4 domains (The Reading Agency, 2016):

1. Health & Wellbeing Outcomes

- Mental health
- Physical health
- Relaxation

2. Intellectual outcomes

- Attainment
- Critical thinking
- Focus & Concentration
- Knowledge
- Language & Literacy

3. Personal outcomes

- Being open-minded
- Creativity
- Empathy
- Self-expression
- Self-esteem

4. Social Outcomes

- Communication skills
- Relationship
- Social & Cultural Participation
- Understanding self & others

LITERATURE REVIEW: NEXT STEPS

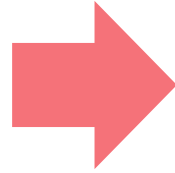
The insights from the literature review have contributed to determining how DCC articulates and seeks to measure its own impact, helping to:

1. Develop the Theory of Change

- Inputs
- Activities
- Outputs
- Outcomes
- Impact

Use to:

Demonstrate how DCC's program inputs and activities enable impact to be created

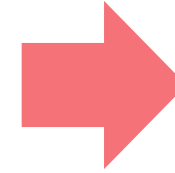


1. Define the Golden Thread

- If we...
- It will...
- Leading to...
- Enabling...

Use to:

Communicate at a high level the impact DCC exists to create



3. Develop the Measurement Framework

- Indicators
- Means of Verification

Use to:

Identify the data that needs to be collected and analysed to demonstrate impact

THEORY OF CHANGE

A Theory of Change (ToC) maps out the “missing middle” between what a program does (its activities and outputs) and how these lead to desired goals being achieved (outcomes). It does this by identifying the expected long-term objectives and then works back from these to identify the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place for the objectives to be achieved. The ToC below was developed from a workshop involving staff, board members and program participants.

Activities	Outputs	Stakeholders	Short-term outcomes	Longer term outcomes	Goals
<p>DCC programs provide access to a wide range of brand new, new release and relevant books</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offering choice of books to teachers, librarians, and students Providing students and schools with new books they have identified and chosen Creating activities with partners <p>DCC is also developing paid author workshops</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of books provided Number of children receiving books Number of locations the programs work in Value of books distributed Number of school visits/ events held 	Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality books to borrow and read Quality books to own and keep Increased word recognition & vocab development Increased reading time at home and school Increased enthusiasm for reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children develop a love of reading Children improve reading and writing ability Children develop improved social and personal skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote a love of reading for children in Australia. Improve literacy outcomes for children in Australia Support the important work of libraries in schools <p>So that :</p> <p>.... Children lead healthier and happier lives</p> <p>.....Children do well in school</p>
		Schools, including Library staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Libraries are improved/ upgraded Libraries increase borrowing rates Improved accessibility for hard to reach schools Librarians and staff are supported and empowered Schools improve their range of culturally diverse books More ‘equal’ access to the curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers and schools have increased pride in libraries School libraries are recognised as valuable and more supported Schools can provide same opportunities for all children 	
		Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are supported to encourage children off screens and into books Parents have more opportunities to read with their children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents feel more aware of and connected with their children’s reading progress 	
		Partners and collaborators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children outside of schools have access to the program Partners can improve/extend their reach to target audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners and collaborators increase their access, and benefit to communities 	

GOLDEN THREAD

The golden thread represents an overarching summary of the DCC Theory of Change. The value of the golden thread is that it can be used to communicate succinctly the impact that DCC seeks to achieve.

The DCC Programs are a collaboration between...	Which.....	So that...	Leading to...	Enabling...
STAKEHOLDERS	ACTIVITIES	SHORT TERM OUTCOMES	LONGER TERM OUTCOMES	IMPACT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children Schools and their staff Parents and carers Community and public sector partners and collaborators Authors publishers and distributors Funders and supporters 	<p>Provides children with access to a wide range of brand new, new release and relevant reading books,</p> <p>Either</p> <p>.....directly to them at home,</p> <p>Or</p> <p>....through replenished and regenerated school libraries</p>	<p>Children get quality books to read at home, which they then own and keep</p> <p>And...</p> <p>Schools can upgrade their libraries which generates increased usage time and borrowing rates by children</p> <p>With the result that...</p> <p>Children increase their reading time at home and at school, and develop increased enthusiasm for reading</p>	<p>Children developing a love of reading, improving their reading and writing abilities, as well as their social and personal skills</p> <p>+</p> <p>Schools enhancing the role and value of their libraries and associated staff, and providing improved and more equal access to the curriculum</p> <p>+</p> <p>Parents and carers feeling more aware of and actively engaged with their children’s reading progress</p>	<p>Children to do well in school, and lead healthier and happier lives</p> <p>+</p> <p>School libraries to be supported and sustained in their important work</p> <p>+</p> <p>Improved literacy outcomes for Australian children</p>

GOLDEN THREAD: SUMMARISED

Summarising the Golden Thread and taking it up a level can be used effectively in marketing and communications as an 'elevator pitch' where the more detailed Theory of Change may not be appropriate.

If we provide children with a range of new and relevant reading books...

It will ensure that children and schools have access to quality books, increasing their enthusiasm for reading...

Leading to:

- Improved reading, writing and social skills for children
- Increased use of school libraries and their contribution to literacy
- Parents and carers being more involved with their children's reading progress

Enabling children to lead healthier and happier lives with improved literacy outcomes while supporting school libraries in their important work.



MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

The measurement framework sets out the outcomes for each stakeholder group that we seek to measure to demonstrate impact. Against each outcome, a set of indicators are developed; these are the measurable markers that show whether a change has occurred in an underlying condition and enable DCC to ascertain whether an outcome has been realised. Each indicator is verified by specifying the quantitative or qualitative data that will be collected for each indicator. The measurement framework shown below has been used to measure the impact of DCC's programs (see section 3 of this report). Given the constraints of time and access exacerbated by COVID, approaches to children and parents were deferred .

Stakeholder Groups	Longer term Outcomes	Indicators	Means of Verification
Children	Children develop a love of reading	Children provide feedback on their enthusiasm for reading	Simple 'assisted' questionnaire for participating children? Baseline/endline surveys of teachers and librarians. and follow-up interviews with a selection of school staff
	Children improve reading and writing ability	Participating children experience measured improvement in reading writing levels including vocab	
	Children develop improved social and personal skills	Observed increase in social and personal skills in participating children	
Schools and their staff	Teachers and schools have increased pride in libraries	Increased resourcing of libraries supported	Baseline/endline surveys of teachers and librarians. and follow-up interviews with a selection of school staff
	School libraries are recognised as valuable and more supported	Borrowing rates before and after DCC programs	
		Staff specifically highlight /positively reference the improvement in libraries	
Schools can provide the same opportunities for all children	Schools report on improved access to reading across the cultural and social spectrum		
Parents and carers	Parents feel more aware of and connected with their children's reading progress	Parents report improvements in connectedness to their children in this area	Parents/caregivers survey
Community partners and collaborators	Partners and collaborators increase their access, and benefit to communities	Partners confirm improvements in their connections with and support to communities	Case study from one partner



03. MEASURING IMPACT



*“Books are the cornerstone of learning
and our children love to read.*

*When our little school was destroyed in the 2019/20 bushfires,
Dymocks Children’s Charities filled a void in donating a library full
of books. Each book will be cherished and already many have
brought smiles to our children's faces.*

*The generosity helped in so many ways in buoying our spirits in
an otherwise devastating time.”*

School Principal



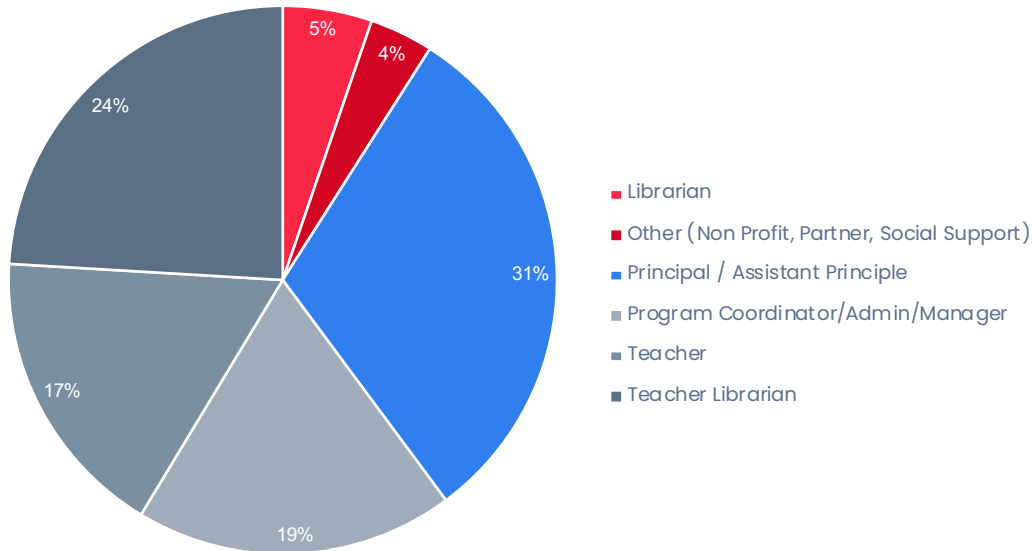
OVERVIEW

To better understand the impact of DCC's programs and develop the impact report, the impact measurement framework was used to design an impact survey and interview questions. The quantitative and qualitative data gathered has been synthesised and presented in this report.



140 SURVEY
RESPONDENTS

Survey Respondents by Type



...with 140 total survey respondents from **all** States and Territories



5 INTERVIEWS
WITH SCHOOLS

- ...covering **4 States**, ranging in size from **130** to **1,000** students
- ...having a broad cultural diversity, including one school with **100% Aboriginal enrolment**
- ...and involving feedback from Principals, Librarians and Classroom Teachers

PROGRAMS REVIEWED

The following DCC programs were reviewed as part of the impact study



Library Regeneration Program

The Library Regeneration Programs (LRP) restock primary school libraries and other important support centres with brand new books of choice.

Books are usually required because of insufficient funding, following natural disasters, or if a library contains very old and unpopular titles. We partner with sponsors, Dymocks stores and schools. The school select brand new books from a carefully curated catalogue of quality titles to ensure they receive the books most suitable for the needs of their students and their curriculum.

124 schools participated in the survey to evaluate the program's impact.



Book Bank Program

Book Bank is DCC's longest running program. It supports children in Years 3–6 from priority primary schools throughout Australia. Students select a brand-new book each term (four per year), every year, for at least three years.

Students are encouraged to share their books with their classmates and take the books home to keep, at the end of every term. The students choose their books from a carefully curated list, which enables them to choose books they are interested in, which engages them with their learning.

There are 14 schools running Book Bank programs around Australia.

13 schools participated in the survey to evaluate the program's impact.



Read at Home Program

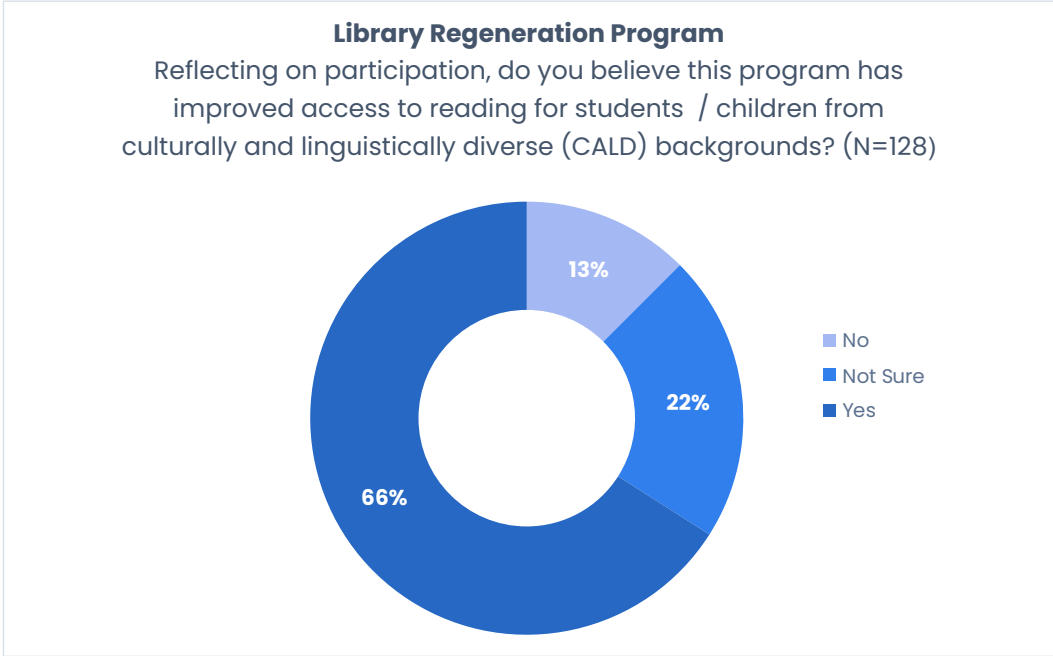
The Read at Home Program was established in April 2020 in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The program supports children of all ages in priority locations in their home environment. Each child receives a book or books to keep and read at home.

The aim of this program is to support children who have limited or no access to school facilities, local libraries or have few or no books of their own. Every dollar raised is doubled in RRP of books, so a \$10 donation will purchase at least one book for a child to keep and read at home.

12 schools participated in the survey to evaluate the program's impact.

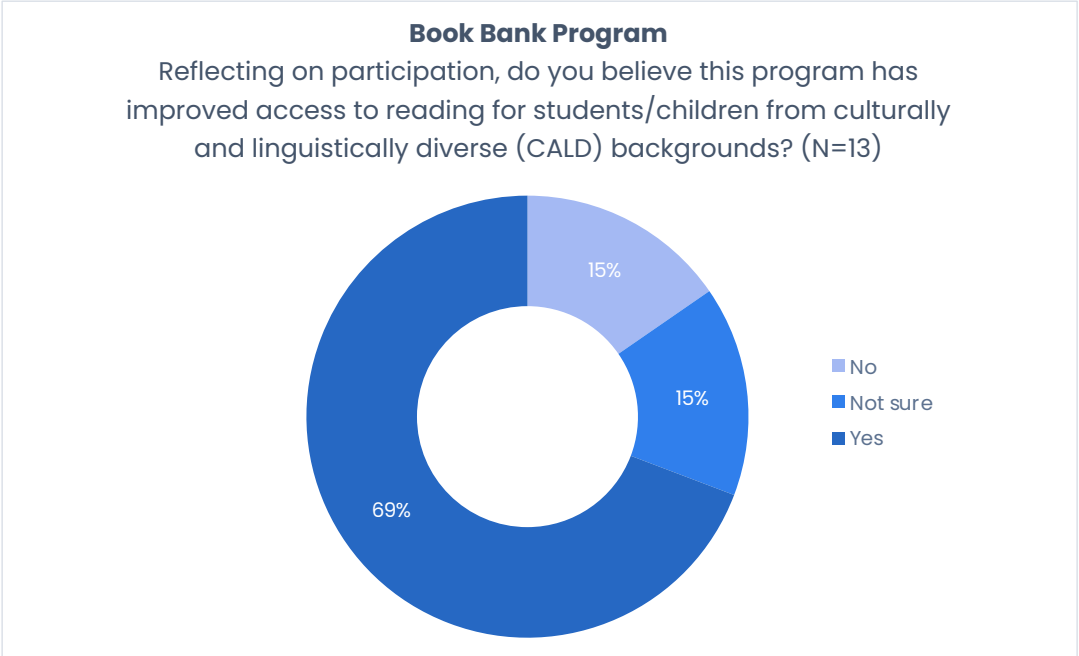
CALD BENEFITS

Across both the Library Regeneration Program and Book Bank Program, the majority of respondents believed that participating in these programs had improved access to reading for students/children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds¹. The supporting commentary provided by respondents suggest this is due to schools being able to provide students with a broader range of relevant and topical books that those with CALD backgrounds can better relate to.



“The donation enabled me to select specific titles. I was able to substantially increase our range of indigenous titles as well as select multiples of books for class study groups.”

Teacher Librarian



“Our school is a Priority Funded School, and as a result, we cater for a diverse population. The Book Bank Program has definitely improved access to reading for our students and they are excited to receive their books each term.”

School Teacher

1. Please note, this data was not available for the Read at Home program

LIBRARY REGENERATION PROGRAM

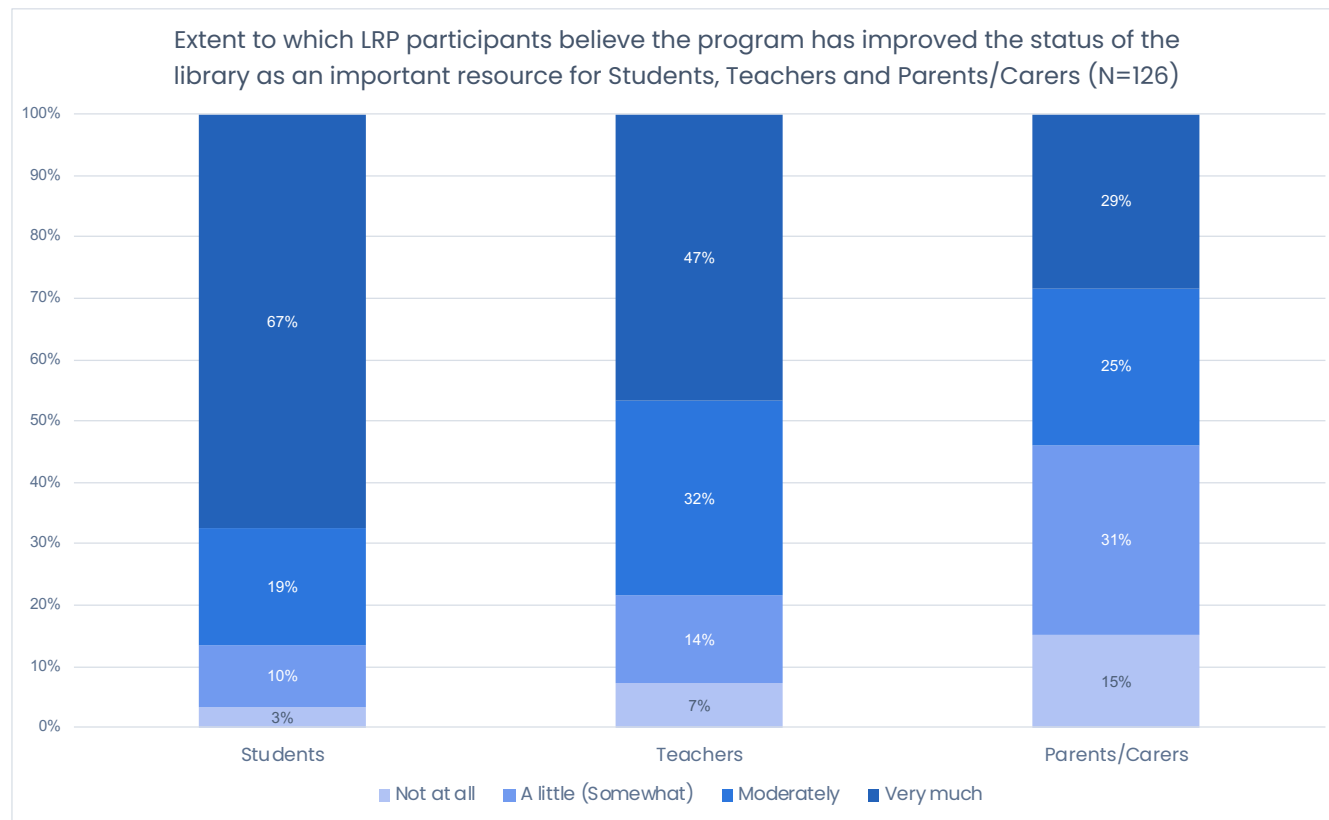
Status of Libraries

86% of respondents believe the Library Regeneration Program (LRP) has very much or moderately improved the status of the library as an important resource for students, while **79%** feel the same for teachers and **54%** of respondents feel similarly for parents or carers.

These findings were supported by school interviewees, who reported significant increases in library usage. Several explained how their replenished library now provides a place of calm and safety, particularly for children with a background of trauma. These responses are positive when considered in the context of the research that shows a decline of public school libraries in Australia; LRP is actively supporting school libraries in an environment of drastic cuts in librarian positions and diminishing budgets. Research from the the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) shows the value of this support, finding 'there's a positive correlation between student achievement and access to an effectively managed, well-resourced library'.

"There has definitely been an increase in the level of interest in reading and borrowing in the library. The purchase of a wide variety of books has enabled us to cater for the various interests and abilities of our students. It has also enabled us to provide books at a suitable level to support the research activities as well as the school programs."

Teacher Librarian



"I have been able to replace old tacky favourites with shiny new publications. This has been wonderful as children do not want to read books with yellow and mildew pages."

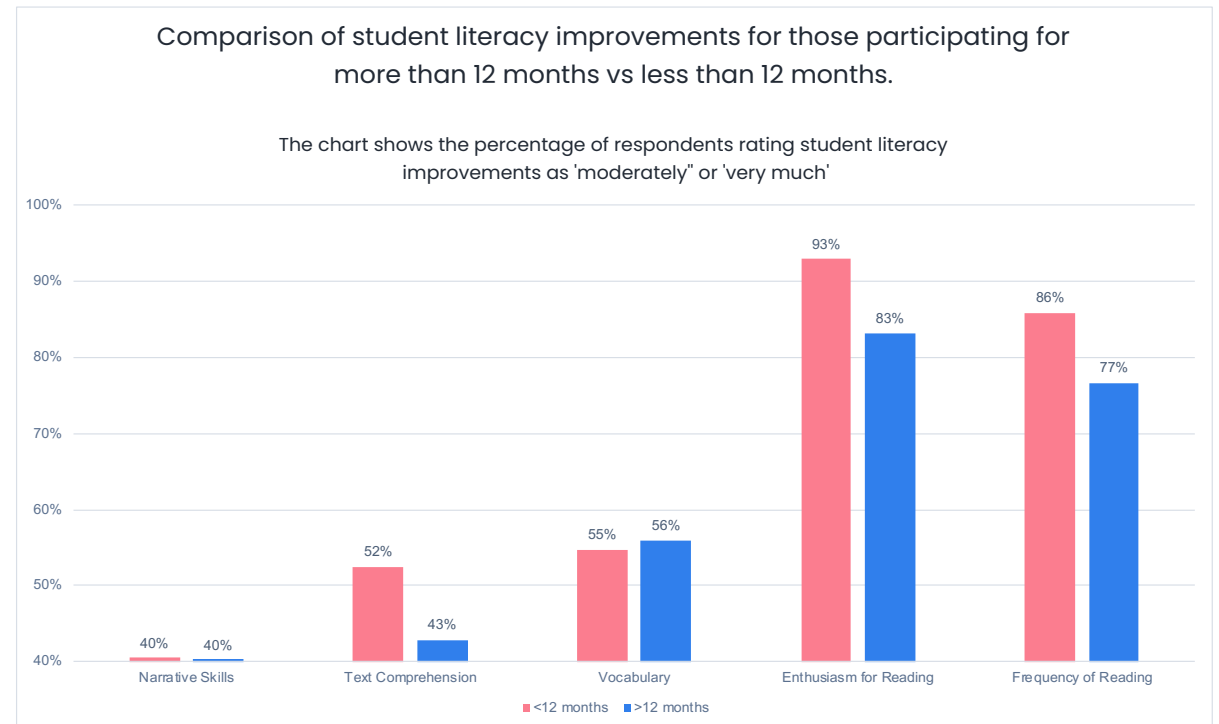
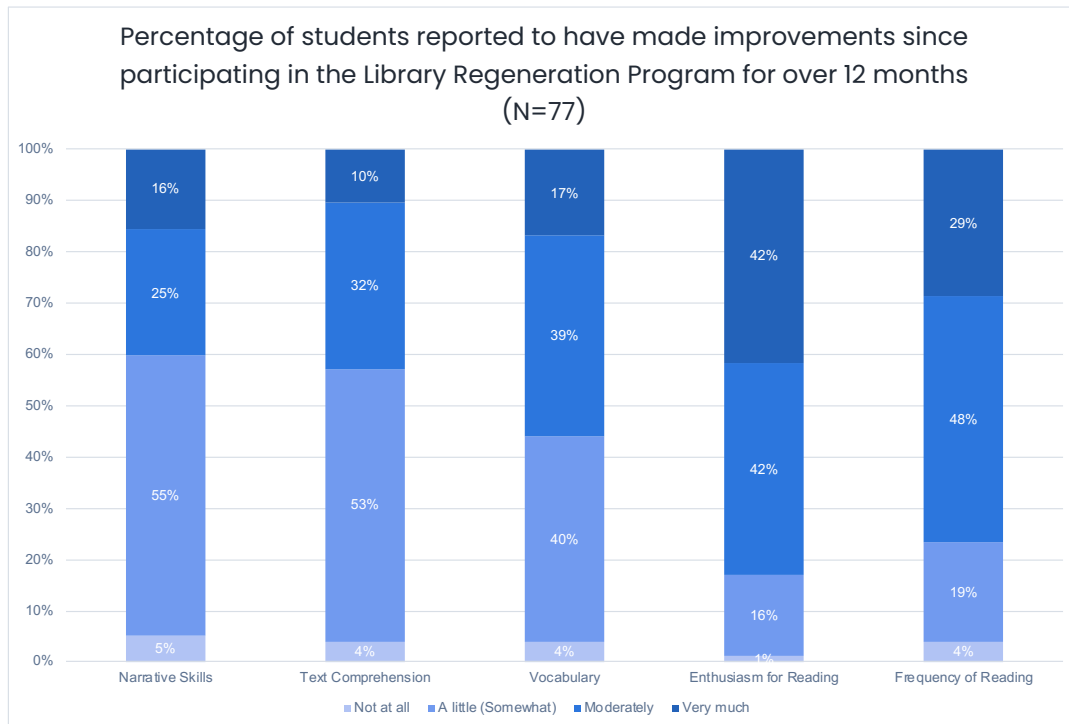
Teacher Librarian

LIBRARY REGENERATION PROGRAM

Literacy Skills

Program participants perceived the greatest improvements to the program are in relation to enthusiasm and frequency of reading, both of which are a highlighted outcome of the program. **99%** of respondents reported increased enthusiasm for reading from 'somewhat' to 'very much'. Smaller but still encouraging improvements around narrative skills, text comprehension and vocabulary were also reported. A comparison of perceived improvements of students participating in LRP for more than 12 months, indicates a modest drop off across some categories, and a slight increase in vocabulary.

Given DCC does not continuously deliver the program to all schools year-on-year, the figures may reflect a decline in the initial interest and excitement the initial program would have generated and could be an opportunity for DCC to re-engage schools to refresh interest in LRP. Additionally, respondents may be attributing less of the improvement to the LRP over time. It should also be noted that responses are based on staff perception rather than NAPLAN data.



LIBRARY REGENERATION PROGRAM

Social Skills

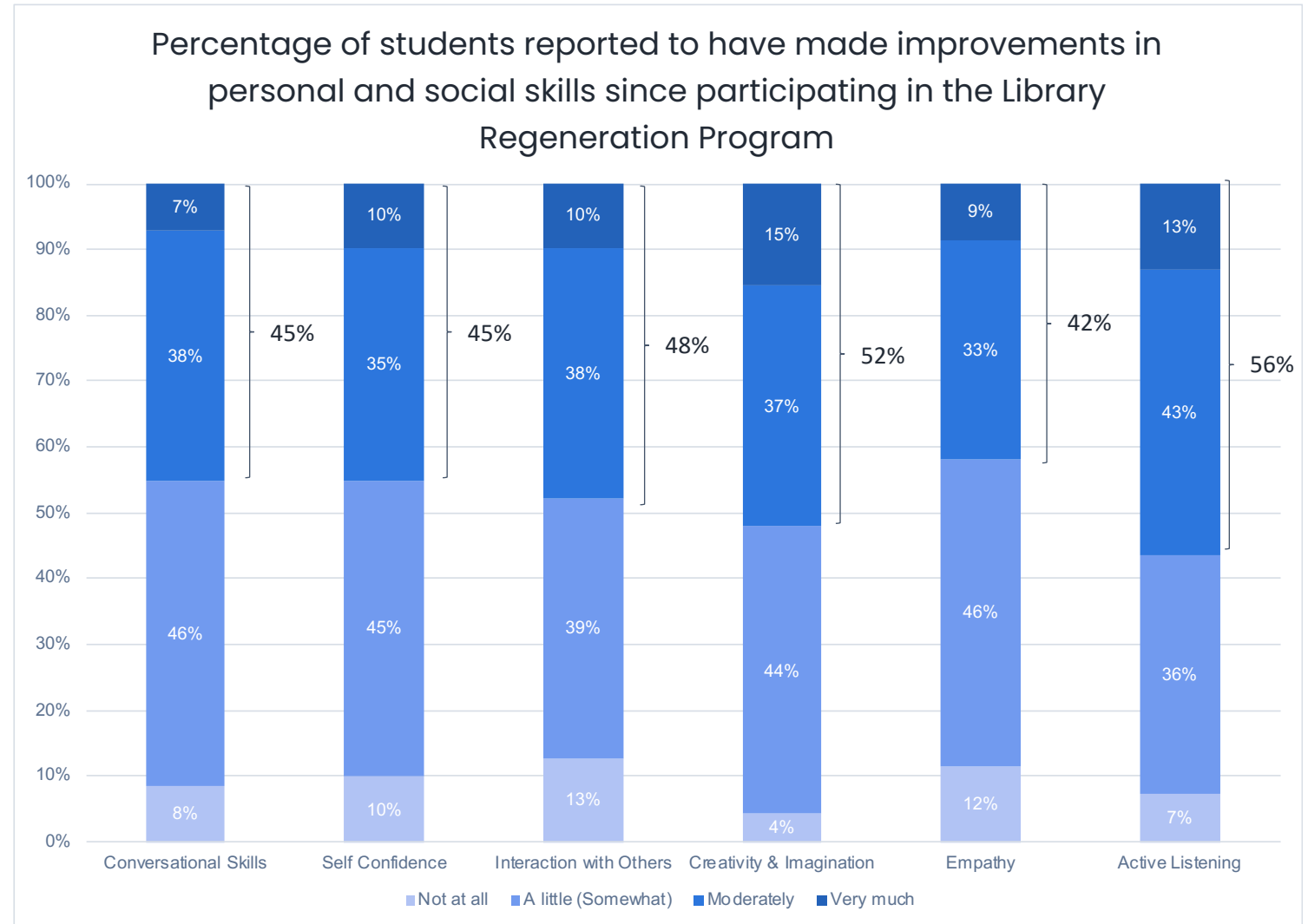
Survey responses indicate improvements across all six social skill areas, most notably:

- Active listening (**56%**)
- Creativity and imagination (**52%**)
- Interaction with others (**48%**)

Across all social skill attributes, only an average of **9%** of respondents believed there had been no change. Whilst based on respondents' perceptions, this is encouraging and gives weight to the expectation that the program is impacting positively on students' social skills, in line with DCC's objectives as outlined in its Theory of Change and golden thread diagram.

"We have seen an increase in the number of children borrowing, particularly in Stage 3. This has translated to a better level of engagement in the classroom during literacy sessions."

Teacher Librarian



Note: this question was only asked of respondents who had been participating in LRP for more than 12 months, given the outcomes being assessed are more likely to be meaningfully observable over a longer time period.

LIBRARY REGENERATION PROGRAM

Anecdotal feedback from survey respondents

“Genuine communication between students about their favourite books definitely increased and even those who were reluctant to share their interest became involved in some of the discussions. Some students who had never borrowed before began to borrow the new books. A few students were inspired by some themes and story lines and included some new ideas into their writing.”

Teacher Librarian

“One of the books that we got through the program was a new set of Atlas's for the library. They were used extensively during library lessons and students were really keen to engage with this resource and many had never looked at an atlas in any great depth but these atlas's were colourful, engaging and easy to read. Students really enjoyed sharing facts that they found with their peers and teachers.”

Teacher Librarian

“The program uplifted the spirits of staff, students and their families due to the generosity of Dymocks Children's Charities and the wider community. It provided important modelling of how wonderful it can be to receive and in turn provided a platform to discuss how we can give to others less fortunate than ourselves. Despite being a part of a disadvantaged community we can always be looking for how to help others.”

Assistant Principal

“Accessing rich literature has fostered a love of reading and given students a wealth of personal language experiences which they may never have experienced, to write about.”

Principal

“The donation enabled me to select specific titles. I was able to substantially increase our range of indigenous titles as well as select multiples of books for class study groups. Further to this I could replace books that have become damaged from overuse so that learning programs that have been successful could be supported. The donated books provided a much needed boost in a time when life was tough for our students and they were extremely grateful.”

Teacher Librarian

LIBRARY REGENERATION PROGRAM

To help DCC build on the success of LRP in the future and maximise their impact, the following observations have been made...

Thoughts for the future

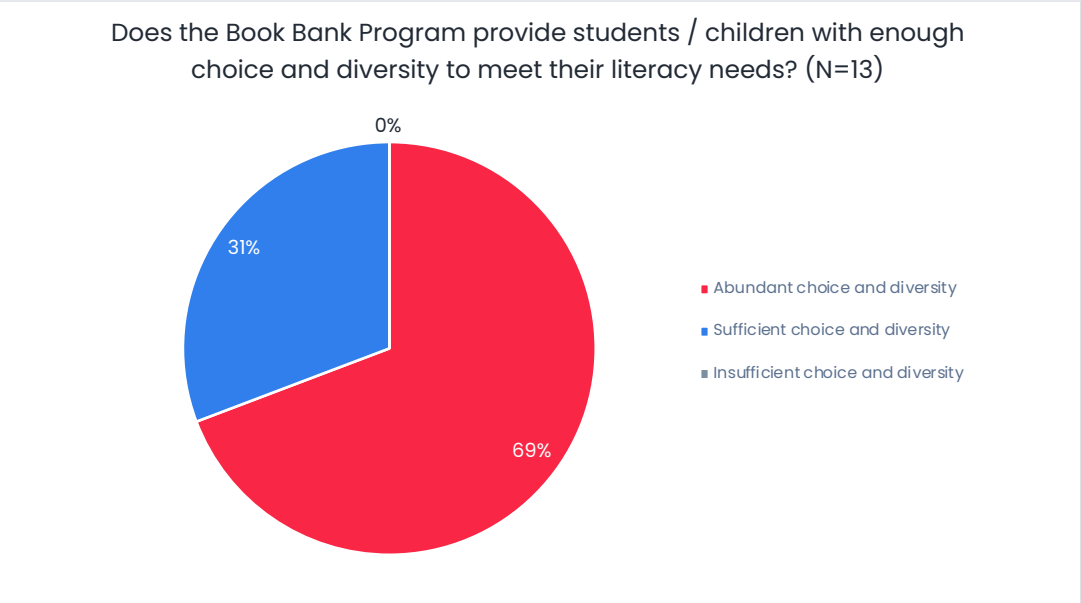
The survey results suggest LRP makes a significant contribution to improving student literacy skills and has very much enhanced the enthusiasm and frequency of reading for children involved. In this regard, the program can be seen to be achieving its shorter term outcomes objectives, in line with DCC's Theory of Change and golden thread.

The DCC Team recognises that their programs will always be positioned as supporting of and supplementary to mainstream teaching, literacy programs and other targeted initiatives. For this reason it is important not to exaggerate or overclaim the influence the programs have (see guiding principles in appendices for guidance on impact measurement).

Nonetheless, building on the insights from this report, and the expressed intent by DCC to continuously improve their programs, there are a number of opportunities that could be considered to enhance this program's impact in the future:

- There may be a benefit in re-engaging with a set of schools through an **awareness campaign** to reinvigorate interest and participation, and positively address any 'drop off' that may have occurred.
- **The importance of libraries** has been highlighted by the report, and given that DCC view their viability and continuation as a key outcome of their investment, further work could be undertaken to better understand and articulate the measurable contribution libraries are making .
- A future DCC initiative might centre on a **'health, happiness and wellbeing'** theme which features as a strong overarching aspiration for all of DCC's programs. DCC can use the anecdotal evidence from surveys and interviews in this report as the basis to build a more robust evidence-base around this.

BOOK BANK PROGRAM



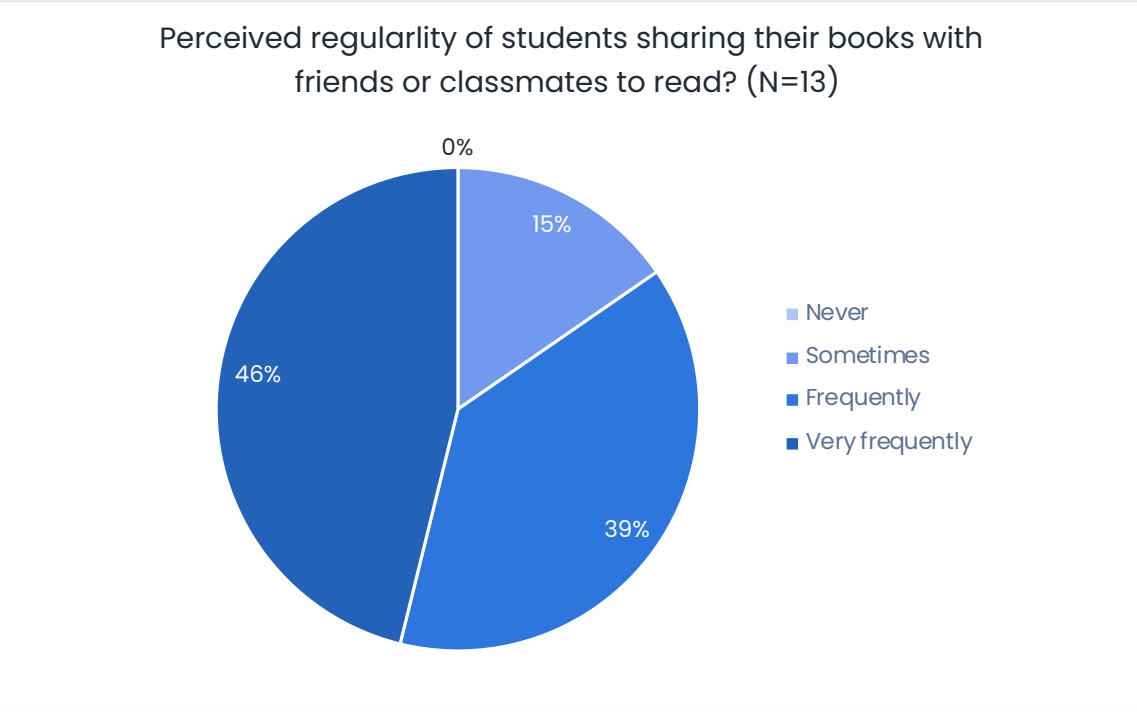
Choice & Diversity

100% of respondents of the survey believed the Book Bank Program (BBP) provided students with enough choice and diversity in books to meet their literacy needs.

All of the schools interviewed expressed satisfaction around the diversity of choice. One remarked that *“There is a very good range, for example cartoon-style books like the Treehouse series which the lower ability kids like because it gives them the chance to look like they’re reading a proper book.”*

Regularity of students sharing books

85% of respondents perceived that students were frequently or very frequently sharing their books with friends or classmates to read. Two of the five interviewees referenced the high frequency of sharing amongst students, which was a change on previous practices. This is a very positive response for DCC who, as the Golden Thread implies, see the benefits that arise in terms of increased connectedness, through conversation and the sharing of experiences.



BOOK BANK PROGRAM

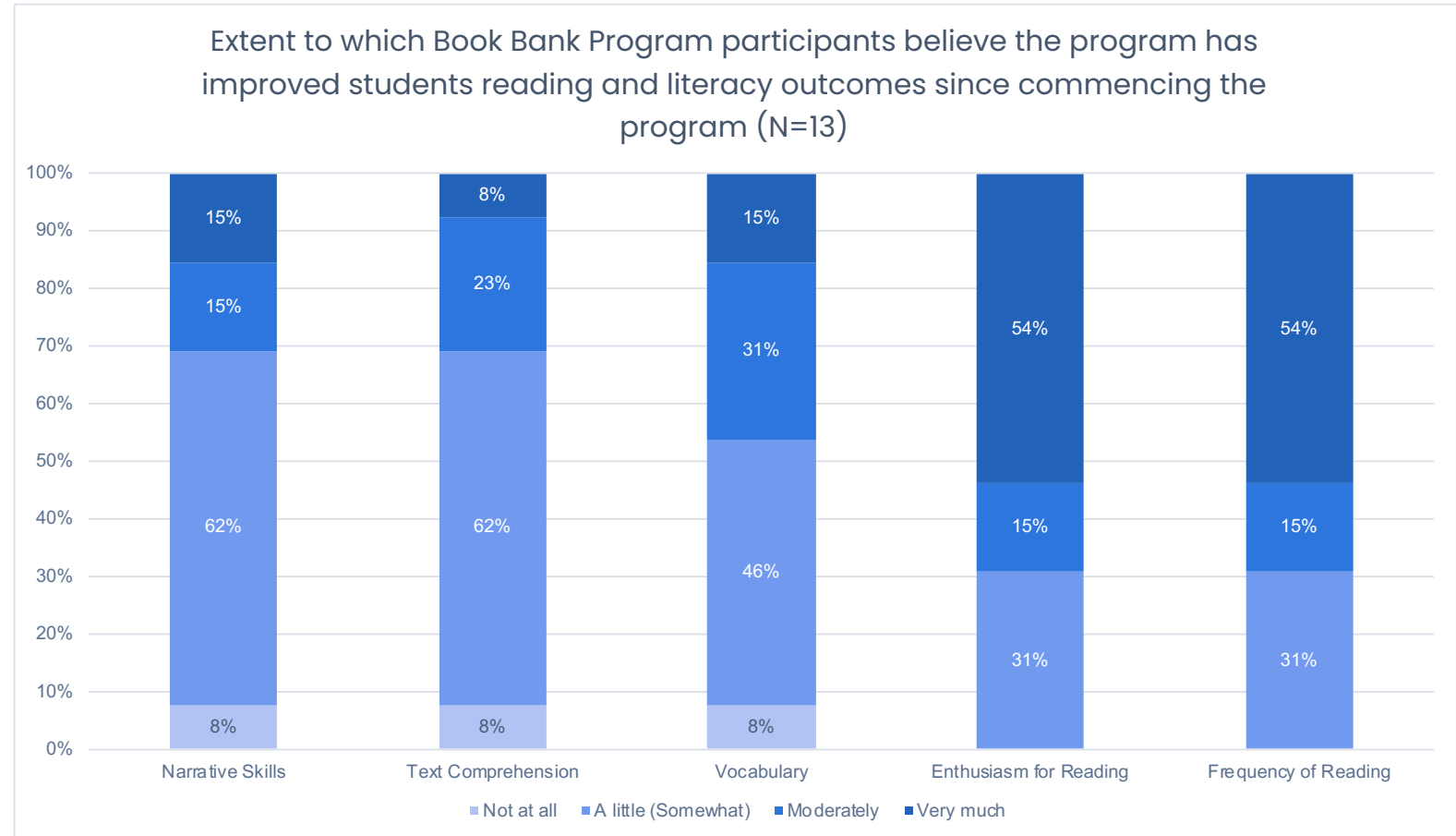
Literacy Skills

As with the Library Regeneration Program, survey respondents highlighted that the Book Bank Program (BBP) has resulted in improvements in enthusiasm for reading and reading frequency, with no-one answering 'not at all' for these two attributes.

While these improvements cannot be attributed to BBP alone (for example, some respondents noted improvements can also be attributed to other initiatives, the quality of teaching etc.), respondents acknowledge that improved access to quality books and texts via the program has been a contributing factor to improving reading and literacy outcomes for students.

“For our kids it makes them feel valued. They don’t have books at home so this really has a positive impact on how they feel about themselves. While we may not be seeing much “academic” improvement, it does improve enthusiasm for reading, helps kids socialise - books become part of their lives.”

Teacher



BOOK BANK PROGRAM

Social Skills

It is noteworthy that there was no 'not at all' response to any of the social skills categories, indicating that all survey respondents perceived that the BBP has supported improved social skills for students to some extent. Notable contributions to improve social skills attributes (combining 'very much' and 'moderately') include:

- Creativity and Imagination (**54%**)
- Active listening (**45%**)
- Interaction with others (**45%**)

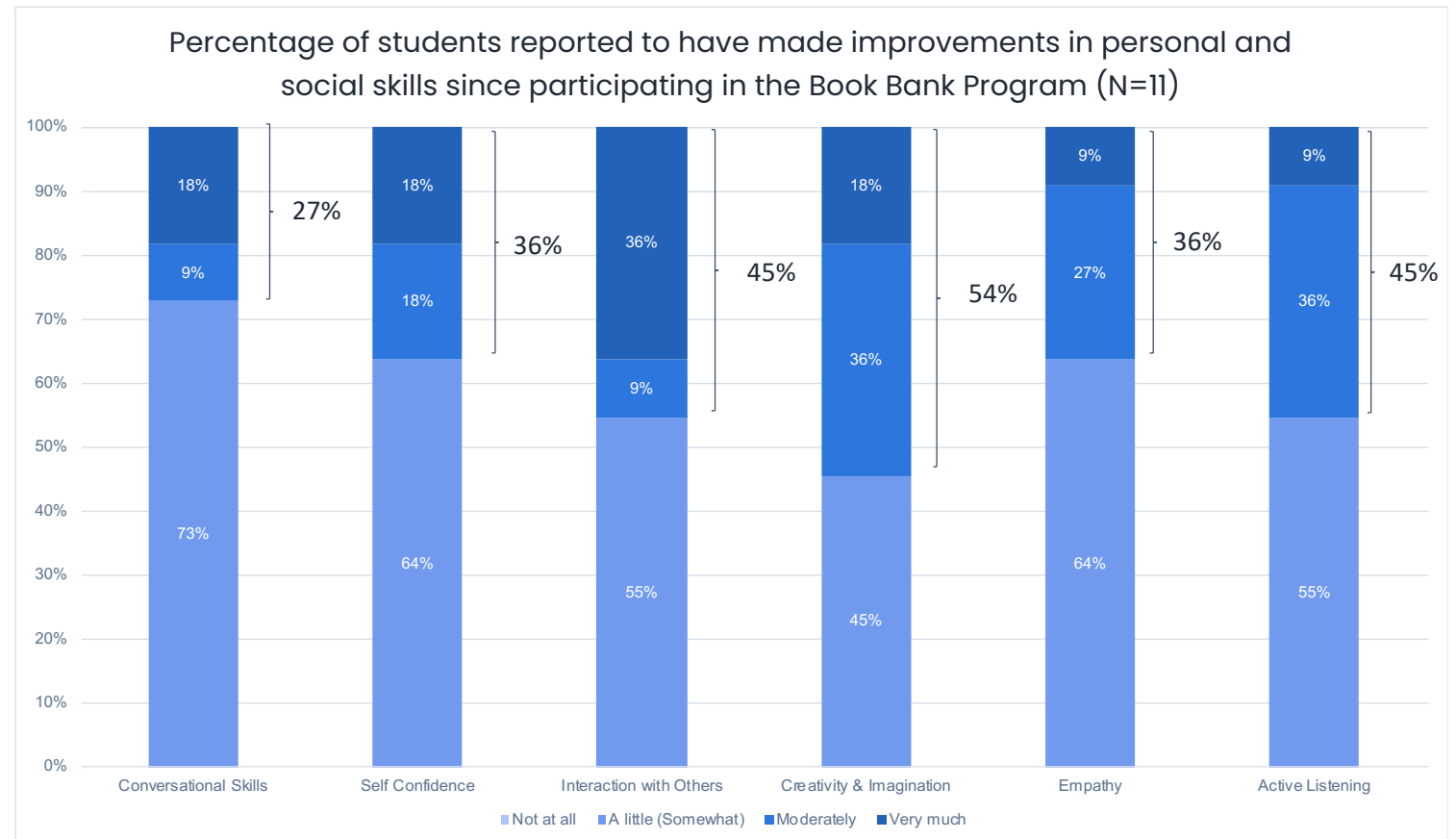
This suggests the program is contributing positively to the development of personal and social skills. As with the Library Regeneration Program, respondents noted that this program sits alongside a range of other initiatives that foster social interaction and self-expression, which could also be expected to have positive impact in personal and social development.

"Reading was never considered 'cool' in our school but since Book Bank Program came, books have become cool!"

Teacher

"Literacy is the number one priority in the school so we have a range of resources focused on it. Dymocks Children's Charities program plays an important part. Having new books emphasises how much we value reading. When we did a big display of the new books, students were really excited and engaged, which was good to see, given the inevitable emphasis on 'reading on screen.'"

Teacher



BOOK BANK PROGRAM

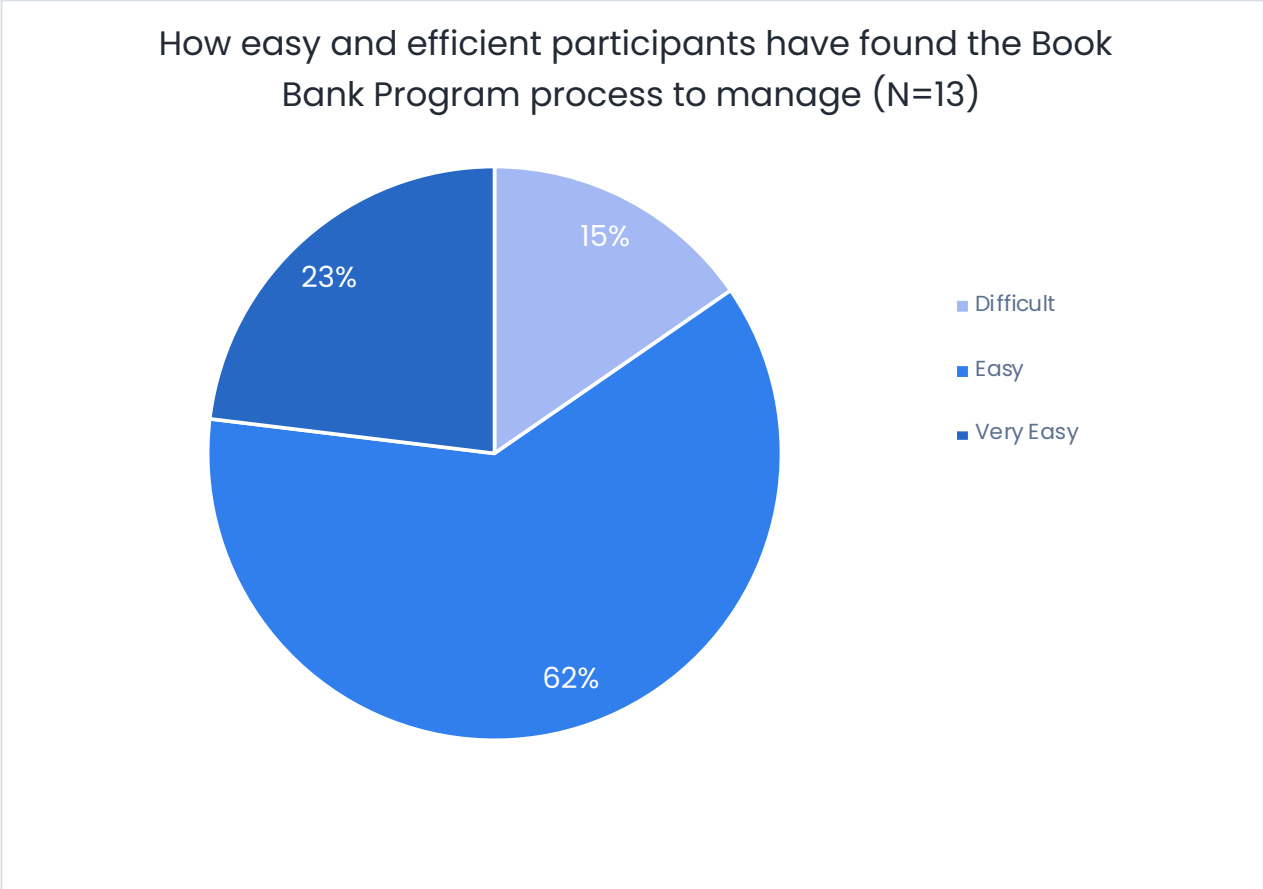
Program Efficiency

85% of respondents believed the program management process to be easy and efficient.

Two of the schools interviewed said they would welcome earlier notification of their being selected and one mentioned the challenge of dealing with delays in arrivals of orders. Despite this, they and others said that they had good relations with their contact and were happy with DCC's responsiveness to queries or additional requests.

"We have enjoyed a great relationship with Dymocks Children's Charities throughout . We understand the size of the program can sometimes create pressure on the system, but it has always worked well for us."

Teacher



BOOK BANK PROGRAM

Thoughts for the future

BBP has been running for a number of years and the feedback from schools that have been involved over time testifies to a significant contribution to stimulating and sustaining interest in and enthusiasm for reading, both at home and school. For many children, this is the first time they have owned a book, and the evidence is that for some this stimulates them to read more, and also to share the pleasure of that experience with their friends and family - all of which can be considered to validate a number of expected outcomes identified in the Theory of Change.

As stated for the Library Regeneration Program, the DCC team recognises that their programs provide contributory support to teaching and other mainstream literacy programs or targeted initiatives within schools. This is an important consideration for any program determining its impact (see guiding principles in appendices for guidance on impact measurement).

Nonetheless, building on the insights from this report, and the expressed intent by DCC to continuously improve their programs, there are a number of opportunities that could be considered to enhance this program's impact in the future:

- It would be useful to get more information on the **extent to which the program influences parents' involvement** in supporting their child's reading, and if and how that in turn has an impact on the progress they make. This would also be helpful to gauge how to generate more support and engagement from parents.
- A deeper (and more direct) **facilitated interaction with participating children** could provide a range of insights into individual experiences, which could inform for example book choices and diversity, numbers and frequency. This report did not extend to seeking direct input from children or their parents, and there could be value in pursuing this in the future, with the aim of improving the program.
- Continuing that theme, **further consultation with schools, focused on identifying improvements** could generate ideas around how, for example, books can be used in schools to incentivise and reward students.

BOOK BANK PROGRAM

Anecdotal feedback from survey respondents

“The collaboration factor has been a huge success and then sending books into the homes for external learning is fantastic.”

Advanced Skills Teacher

“Book Bank is a wonderful program which makes students feel enthusiastic about the books that they receive and more willing to try different authors and texts when gifted with books.”

Teacher Librarian

“The Book Bank program provided by Dymocks Children's Charities is a most generous program. Children, who often have no books at home are provided with 4 books each year, that they choose! They can also share their books with their classmates. Our students can't wait to receive their new books each term and it has become a sort of "tradition" for class captains to collect the class box for teachers to hand out books each term! Thank you!”

Teacher

“We cater for a diverse population. The Book Bank Program has definitely improved access to reading for our students and they are excited to receive their books each term.”

Teacher

“In one instance there was a situation where dad couldn't read and when mum was reading to the children he'd rip the books up. Now they have their own books which they can protect and value.”

Teacher

READ AT HOME PROGRAM

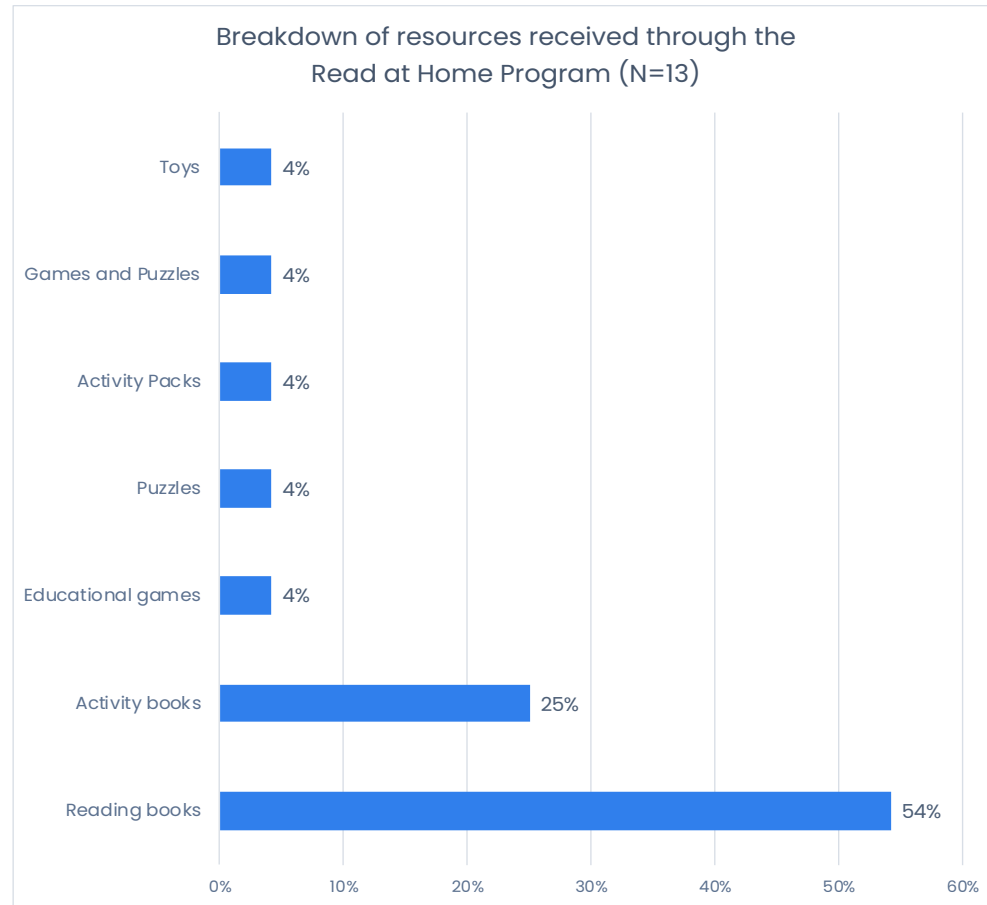
The example of Dandenong West Primary School sets out the context for the Read at Home program, and also testifies to some of the benefits. DCC delivered over \$11,000 worth of books to Dandenong West Primary School during the Melbourne Lockdown in August 2020. The school had not integrated into online learning and many of their families did not have computers or Wi-Fi at home. When DCC posted over **600** books to their school, the teachers drove to each family to deliver books and homework sheets to over **300** students.

“Seeing the reactions on the parents’ faces when we brought books to them was priceless, the parents were surprised and very grateful. And it made us [teachers] who were making the deliveries very proud to be able to do this for our community. Despite a lot of driving and multiple trips to further provide iPads and USB Wi-Fi devices, it instilled pride in our community and brought our families closer during a time of crisis. When school returned, parents who didn’t come into the school before came to thank us.”

English as Additional Language teacher

92% of respondents receiving reading books through the Read at Home Program

found them very helpful. Respondents found the program resources the most valuable in promoting book ownership (**85%**), helping alleviate isolation being experienced due to COVID-19 restrictions (**77%**) and providing fun, distraction and entertainment (**77%**).



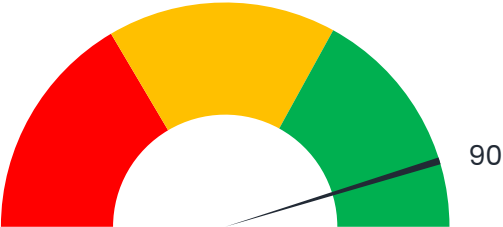
NET PROMOTER SCORES

Survey participants were asked how likely they would be to recommend the program they participated in. All three programs scored highly which indicates that most schools participating in the programs are strong advocates for DCC's work.



Library Regeneration Program NPS

On a scale from 1-10, how likely are you to recommend the Library Regeneration Program? (N=124)



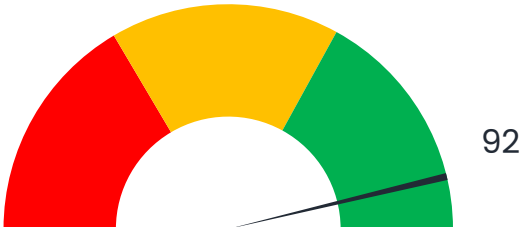
Book Bank Program NPS

On a scale from 1-10, how likely are you to recommend the Book Bank Program? (N=13)



Read at Home Program NPS

On a scale from 1-10, how likely are you to recommend the Read at Home Program? (N=12)



Note: The total number of respondents for NPS survey questions was 149, greater than the total number of respondents for the survey (140). This is because certain respondents participated in more than one DCC program.

PROGRAM TESTIMONIALS

"Our school community began 2020 in the grip of the bushfires. This impact alone was substantial to our whole community. The COVID lockdown and subsequent disruption to families and the whole community continued the stress and isolation. To be supported by organisations who responded to our need made us feel immensely supported. It was a valuable boost to our community. As we could tailor the book list to our requirements, we could meet many areas of need. Each delivery was like Christmas!"

Teacher Librarian

"I experienced children receiving their books and those experiences are unforgettable. The happiness and laughter and sharing of reading is incredible."

Program Coordinator

"I only have good things to say about Dymocks Children's Charities ... good communication, and a positive attitude. Mostly a really quick turnaround and an excellent outcome for the school. I'm not sure how we were chosen, but very grateful that we were!"

Teacher

"The impact is real and massive and comes from a combination of initiatives. Together they have had a massive impact on getting kids passionate about reading. It's a much richer experience to get the information or enjoyment off print. Reading is now not just tacked on but seen as a chosen subject. "

Teacher Librarian

"Dymocks Children's Charities was an important part of our planned change of focus of the library. It's now the 'innovation centre' ...a place for kids to come and work on different projects. We can typically have 100 at lunchtimes. For a school our size we now have a very good library."

Teacher

"I just wanted to say what a wonderful program this has been for our school. The Library Regeneration Program by Dymocks Children's Charities has been a huge boost to our collection that the children are very excited about. Seeing the new items has generated huge interest. Many children spotted titles that they are desperate to borrow as it is a title that was missing in our collection, or part of a series they had only just discovered. The teachers have also shown great interest as we have been able to prop up our collection for books, providing a deeper range of books that can support lessons in the classroom. Right up to the day we released the books for borrowing we had to put up with the daily 'Are they ready yet?' requests from the kids eager to borrow them. It has been a great boost!"

Teacher

"One particular boy cried when he got a free book with his name in the front of it as he said he had never owned a book of his very own before."

Teacher Librarian

"The students loved their new books and the smiles on their faces was priceless so thank you!"

Library Officer

LEARNINGS

It should be borne in mind that this review was conducted during COVID-19 , and the information gathered was related to the programs as they were being delivered under those constraints. It is also the case that most of the responses were from teachers, and do not include direct input from other stakeholders, including parents and students themselves. In this context, there are a number of learnings that can be noted to further improve DCC's impact in the future:

- **Low awareness of DCC programs in schools.** Whilst DCC's programs have been well received and valued, a number of survey and interview respondents said they only became aware of the program once their school was participating. Some recommended DCC advertise its programs more widely at all stages in the process.
- **Staggering book donations.** Some schools recommended working with them to coordinate the delivery of book donations as storage space can become an issue when managing a high volume of books.
- **Provide more time from the ordering/delivery of books to the presentation.** One school indicated it took a while for books to arrive from various publishers and it was rushed to getting information about the titles purchased out to our school community. Given this appeared to be an isolated incident, DCC may wish to follow up with this school independently to better understand whether this may be indicative of a broader issue.
- **Continue to measure program outcomes in the future.** While the response levels were high for the Book Bank and Read at Home Programs participants, revisiting measuring the outcomes for these programs in the future with a larger sample size would improve the reliability of insights obtained.



06. APPENDICES



LITERATURE REVIEW SOURCES

- BOP Consulting. (2015). Literature review: The impact of reading for pleasure and empowerment (The Reading Agency).
- Guthrie, J.T. & Alvermann, D. E. (1999). Engaged Reading: Processes, Practices, and Policy Implications. New York: Teachers College Press.
- National Literacy Trust (2006). Reading for pleasure: A research overview.
- OECD (2002). Reading for change: Performance and engagement across countries. Results from PISA 2000. New York: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- The Reading Agency (2006). The Summer Reading Challenge 2005. London: TRA.
- E reserve plus (2018) Keeping school libraries relevant in the 21st century

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The development of the impact report, Theory of Change and Measurement Framework has been guided by the following principles¹

01

Ensure strategic and purpose alignment

Align program activities that generate impact to the overarching purpose of 'creating social good' that is common across the key program stakeholders.

02

Be Stakeholder Centric

Engage stakeholders and explore the nature and quality of the relationships between them, including how the program activities take into account their legitimate needs, interests, and the resources they have available.

03

Be accessible, insightful and sustainable

Ensure that the program Theory of Change and measurement framework are accessible (by being easy to understand and maintain) and support high level and detailed insights using both quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate outcomes.

04

Only include what is material and be pragmatic

Determine what information must be included to give a true and fair picture, such that stakeholders can draw reasonable conclusions about impact. This means considering all material matters, both positive and negative, in a balanced way and without material error.

05

Ensure consistency and comparability

Present information consistently over time and related the information to a baseline. Where possible, pragmatically use existing evidence and metrics to enable comparison of impact against business as usual, or other suitable benchmarks.

06

Don't over claim.

Only claim the value that program activities contribute to creating impact and disclose information about matters that substantively affect the program's ability to create value over the short, medium and long term.

1. These guiding principles have been developed with reference to:

- The International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC)
- The Centre for Social Impact 'The Compass'
- Australian Social Value Bank

