



Wollongong Living Library 2009

Over 2009, the Wollongong Living Library program consolidated its important role in building bridges of understanding in the community. The program's foundation is its diverse collection of local community members who volunteer their time to share valuable insights and life experiences.

Since the program's launch in June 2008, 11 Living Library events have been held in a variety of locations. The 6 events held in 2009 maintained the Living Library's excellent reputation for challenging stereotypes and helping people to recognise and value the diversity of our local community. The program also kept its innovative edge:

- For the first time, the Living Library program was incorporated into the school curriculum with its event at Keira High School. The HSC assessment task asked students to write an essay based on either George Orwell's *Animal Farm* or the life experiences of one of the Living Books.
- First Corporate event, with staff attending from a range of workplaces, including Illawarra Community Services, Illawarra Children's Services, Australian Health Management, DOCs, Multicultural Communities Council Illawarra and Wollongong City Council. The excellent feedback showed the program's value as a staff development tool.
- The Living Library ventured into the conference world, with its inclusion in *One Life, One Voice, Make a Difference* social justice conference at Edmund Rice College, attended by students from 8 different schools.
- Our first event with seniors met with resounding success, proving that the format works just as well with older people as it does with younger people.
- The program attracted unprecedented media coverage with 16 'books' profiled in the Illawarra Mercury, the majority of whom featured in one page articles in the Weekender section. This not only widened the program's audience, it also recognised lives, experiences and contributions of a diversity of local community members.

In keeping with our commitment to support our Living Books, we continued to provide a debrief and lunch after each Living Library event. We also held two workshops/gatherings for 'books' to connect socially, practise stories and exchange ideas.

As part of the broader Living Library movement, our team supported the development of Wollongong's Youth Living Library (held at Viva la Gong), the first Shellharbour TAFE Living Library and for the second year, the Wollongong TAFE Living Library.

"inspired me, opened up choices, and expanded my mind" Year 11 student, Figtree High School

2009 Snapshot

Figtree High School Year 10 & 11 students	5 March	14 'books'	120 readers
University of the Third Age Seniors Week Community Event	16 March	16 'books'	90 readers
Corrimal Library Community Event	28 May	13 'books'	18 readers
Keira High School Year 11 students	13 August	17 'books'	90 readers
Corporate Event, Wollongong City Council	9 September	21 'books'	56 readers
Social Justice Conference, Edmund Rice College	18 November	7 'books'	67 readers



28 'books' participated.
8 new books joined the program (pictured).
441 'readers' participated.



Further information:

www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/community

www.livinglibraries.org.au (Australia)

www.living-library.org (Europe)

“The smorgasbord of diversity – my appreciation of the power of the human spirit has grown. My appreciation of uniqueness and also of what is common to us all is reinforced and heightened.”

Reader from corporate event, Wollongong City Council