The background image shows two young girls sitting together, looking at a tablet. The girl on the left has long brown hair and is wearing a light green t-shirt with a cat illustration. The girl on the right has dark hair in pigtails with purple clips and is wearing a purple shirt and white overalls. In the foreground, the head of a small, scruffy dog with grey and white fur is visible, wearing a blue harness. The overall scene is bright and outdoors.

# First 5 Forever Evaluation Report 2015 -2018 FINAL REPORT

815/250/009

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# Background.

First 5 Forever is a family literacy initiative delivered by public libraries in Queensland. The primary objective of First 5 Forever is to create stronger language and early literacy environments for all Queensland children aged 0-5 years and their families, through access to free resources and services delivered by public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKC's) and professional development for library staff to build their skills in delivering early literacy sessions for families.

First 5 Forever commenced as a \$20 million 4-year (2015-2018) initiative of the Queensland Government, coordinated by State Library of Queensland and delivered in partnership with local government through a network of more than 320 public libraries and IKCs. The First 5 Forever program has now received ongoing annual funding; however, the evaluation in this report refers to the first four years of the initiative only (2015-2018).

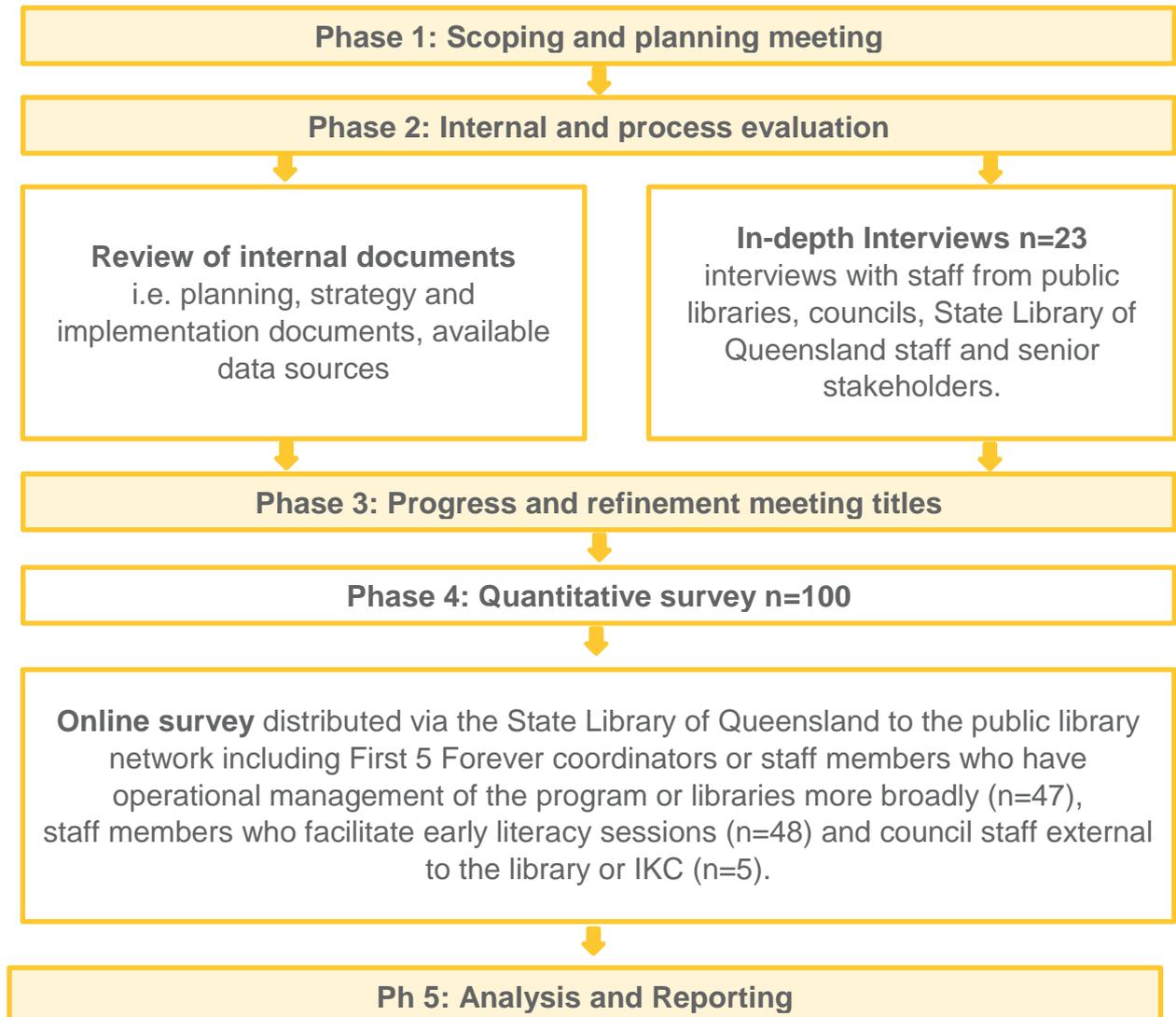
# Research objectives.

The aim of this evaluation is to provide an assessment of the First 5 Forever program (2015-2018), focusing on the following elements:

- Provide an independent, external assessment of the first four years of First 5 Forever (2015-2018).
- Focus on the uptake of the initiative and the impact of First 5 Forever.
- Include conversations and/or surveys of the participating staff and key stakeholders for the First 5 Forever program including council staff, library staff and partner organisations.
- Focus on the intended deliverables of First 5 Forever and be informed through the analysis of existing quantitative and qualitative data sets from the four years of delivery, and analysis of new content as recommended and collected by the supplier in agreement with the State Library of Queensland.
- The First 5 Forever deliverables are:
  - Increasing access to early literacy experiences
  - Reaching all families with children aged 0-5 years
  - Collaborative partnerships and coordination of networks
  - Workforce capability and standards
  - Family and community awareness campaign.
- Include recommendations on how the State Library of Queensland can build on the first four years of First 5 Forever, and how to apply learnings to help leverage future opportunities.

# Methodology.

An overview of the approach that was undertaken during the evaluation is outlined below.



# Executive Summary.

Breaking down isolation for parents, caregivers and children has been a key strength of the First 5 Forever program (the program) during 2015-2018 period. The program placed emphasis on inclusion to help parents and caregivers feel more comfortable approaching and participating in literacy activities compared to more formal education programs available for toddlers. Additionally, the free offering of the program removed any potential financial barriers for parents and caregivers.

Parents and caregivers exposed to the program gained a higher appreciation for the importance of early childhood literacy, and the value of using this as a tool to connect with their child. Sessions such as Story Time and Rhyme Time truly highlight the value of books and stories; children who consistently attended sessions experienced substantial improvement in understanding sounds, words and language. This coupled with the consistent messaging of the program's role in assisting childhood brain development, and emphasis on anyone's ability to be an educator, acted as the foundation to the program's success.

Professional development and training materials have played a key role in increasing confidence amongst public library staff in their ability to deliver early childhood literacy sessions. Stakeholders reported witnessing an increase in confidence and an improved knowledge of early childhood education amongst staff delivering the program. This was encapsulated in a reported shift from staff simply 'presenting' a reading session prior to the program, to now 'presenting and facilitating' literacy session in a manner that bolsters active learning.

In terms of attendance, the year-on-year increasing participation numbers in public library and outreach sessions highlights the value that parents and caregivers have seen in this program. The proportion of sessions to attendance is particularly pronounced in outreach sessions where attendance numbers have more than tripled since the program's commencement (38.5K attendance in 2015 to 144.4K attendance in 2018). Outreach has been a successful tool for connecting with non-library users via linking First 5 Forever to other activities relevant to the target demographic, such as local mothers' groups.

# Recommendations.

## ***Gauge the future funding requirements of councils.***

The initial distribution of program funds skewed heavily to more populous (metro) council areas, due to population based funding. Whilst metro areas benefitted from this funding distribution in many ways (such as adequate staffing and materials), rural and regional council areas were unable to access similar levels of resourcing. Primarily, this was driven by the inability of smaller councils to leverage and utilise existing resources, including staffing, as well as the inability to utilise specialist program staffing across more activity.

In order to identify appropriate future funding needs, consultation with all regional library coordinators and staff should be undertaken to establish separate strategic initiatives for their future delivery of the program. This would help guide a more wider reaching opportunity base. Coordinators from metro libraries stated they were able to set up elements of the program to be relatively self-sufficient and did not require substantial funding in the future. These potential surplus funds could be redistributed to rural and regional areas to help bolster opportunities in other communities.

## ***Provide choice with resources to increase relevance.***

Further work should be undertaken towards exploring options for making toolkits and materials more flexible. This would allow different local council areas to customise resources which could potentially increase relevance for Queensland's diverse communities and target audiences (regional, rural and metro).

## ***Continue to provide training to those delivering the program.***

Training programs for the staff implementing First 5 Forever are perceived to be one of the most valuable aspects of the program. Ensuring training programs are current and continually utilised will continue to assist in aligning staff skillsets and knowledge. This will help to continue to improve program delivery through increased staff confidence and engagement, and in turn, continue to encourage attendance with families with children aged 0-5 years.

## ***Continue to utilise existing knowledge platforms.***

Many public library staff and program stakeholders highlight the positive communication and collaboration experiences facilitated through the First 5 Forever Facebook group. Further utilisation of this knowledge sharing platform should be continued. This would provide a platform for collaboration and communication and be accessible to anyone involved in the program, particularly during the roll out of any new future programming initiatives.

# Program performance against objectives.

This section of the report focuses on evaluating the performance of the First 5 Forever program against its intended objectives. The evaluation of the program has been informed by in-depth interviews conducted with staff from public libraries, councils, State Library of Queensland staff and senior stakeholders. To further validate this qualitative data, an online survey distributed via the State Library of Queensland to First 5 Forever coordinators and staff members was utilised.

## Objective 1: How did the program harness the existing network of libraries and IKCs across the State?



Percentage indicated the program **met or exceeded their expectations** against this objective.

*\*First 5 Forever Stakeholder survey results for this question are available in Appendix 5. (sample size, n=100).*

Public libraries and IKCs across Queensland have been successfully utilised as a delivery mechanism for the First 5 Forever program. There was a high level of agreement amongst those who participated in the online survey that the program was successful against this objective, with 88% stating it met or exceeded expectations. Through the series of qualitative interviews, the common drivers of success revolved around increasing the collaboration of public libraries across the state, the effective adoption of the brand and efficiencies gained through utilisation of existing public library resources.

### Collaboration

The First 5 Forever program was a catalyst for uniting the network of libraries and IKCs across the state. Prior to this program, public libraries and IKCs worked separately to deliver early literacy programs, with limited opportunity for collaboration and knowledge sharing across the network. The introduction of the First 5 Forever program provided a platform for public libraries and IKCs to connect, collaborate and coordinate programs across public libraries, and council areas/regions. This became a catalyst for encouraging libraries and IKCs to share knowledge beyond the First 5 Forever program, creating a stronger connection between staff, increasing innovation and creating a drive towards continuous improvement.

Initiatives such as committee meetings provided a space for all stakeholders to have a voice and take part in the decision-making. This stakeholder consultation and joint

decision-making led to a stronger sense of ownership of the program from public library staff.

### **Branding**

The use of a state-wide brand for early childhood programming in public libraries along with the strong investment in driving awareness allowed public libraries to focus on delivering a successful program in their area rather than promoting it. The First 5 Forever brand material, widespread reach, and website provided parents and caregivers with increased trust in the legitimacy of the program's activities. Additionally, making resources available to parents and caregivers online supported their ability to participate in the program, regardless of their ability to attend a session in a library.

### **Efficiencies**

One of the greatest strengths of this program was its ability to utilise public libraries and their existing resources. The delivery of the First 5 Forever program in public libraries meant there was no need to start from scratch. Public libraries have also greatly benefitted from this program through increased library membership and borrowing.

*“Libraries are unique because they have everything you need to do early literacy, including staff, and they are free, and everywhere. Absolutely, there is nothing like a public library or IKC to hit these goals.” – Interview participant.*

## **Objective 2: How did the program raise community awareness of the importance of the first five years for children?**

**96%**

*Percentage indicated the program **met or exceeded their expectations** against this objective.*

*\*First 5 Forever Stakeholder survey results for this question are available in Appendix 5. (sample size, n=100).*

First 5 Forever was highly successful against its stated objective of raising community awareness of the importance of brain development during the first five years of life. To do this required a shift in focus of sessions delivered in public libraries across the state prior to the program introduction, an effective messaging strategy and brand activations at a local program that gained the target audiences attention. It was because of these deliverables that, 96% of survey participants felt the program met or exceeded expectations.

### **Changing nature of Story, Rhyme and Baby Time**

The introduction of the First 5 Forever program shifted the focus of Story, Baby and Rhyme Time sessions from entertainment to education, not only for children but also for their parent or caregiver. This new focus on early childhood development strategies has consistently communicated the importance of early literacy and provided a platform with which both children and adults can engage. This shift in focus has resulted in parents and caregivers becoming more involved in and engaged with the First 5 Forever sessions than with previous programs.

*“It made me understand that running a Story Time session is not solely only for entertainment purposes. I’ve learnt to focus on the literacy side of Story Time and adding these key elements when reading stories, talking to children, and interacting with the parents/guardians.” – Online survey participant.*

### **Communications strategy**

Without the support of the First 5 Forever communications plan and strategy, overall awareness of the program would have been limited. Public libraries were able to focus their resources on delivering a successful program rather than dividing their time to help increase awareness. The simple message of “talk, play, sing and read every day” was easy for public library staff to communicate and for parents and caregivers to act upon. State Library of Queensland has been able to build awareness through clear marketing communications, promotional materials and increasing accessibility to the program through the Facebook page, toolkits and website.

### **Customising the program**

With the financial support from the State Library of Queensland and the overarching marketing program in place, councils were able to take a more grassroots approach to building awareness and engagement with the First 5 Forever program. This was done by customising communications to make them relevant to each region.



implementation of staff training programs in public libraries to assist in skill transfer, the program breaking down the barrier's families faced to participate in early literacy and the empowerment of parents to implement learning experiences in the home life.

### **Training staff**

The First 5 Forever program was able to increase the capability of public library staff to share reading skills and increase the confidence of parents and caregivers by providing clear guidelines and staff training run by State Library of Queensland. These staff training programs resulted in a shift in focus from delivering a passive learning experience to an active participation learning model. Where children and parents actively participated in sessions; singing, clapping and talking aloud with the facilitator. Public library staff have been able to pass on their reading skills, along with the tools and resources for parents and caregivers to confidently take on the role of educator at home.

*“The training opportunities have been excellent, and the resources provided have been of a very high calibre.” – Online survey participant*

### **Breaking down barriers to participation**

First 5 Forever gave parents and caregivers access to free, high quality early literacy sessions for their children. The focus for public library staff was to deliver the First 5 Forever program in a judgement free, relaxed environment whilst ensuring the sessions were engaging and inclusive for all family members. This helped to break down misconceptions amongst the community that toddlers and babies may be too young for educational programs, and also relieve apprehension amongst parents and caregivers who lacked confidence in their own abilities to act as an educator for their child.

*“Libraries have long been thought of as quiet and reserved, for the students and the readers only. First 5 Forever has opened up a whole new world of learning, laughter and noise in the library space!” – Online survey participant.*

### **Bringing the program into the home**

Parent and caregiver involvement were a key feature of the First 5 Forever program and have been an important factor in its success. Parents and caregivers who participated in the program have been empowered to take on the role of an educator in their own homes. Parent and caregiver confidence and motivation continued to increase as they began noticing their child's development improving, and as such continued to incorporate this program into their day-to-day lives.

*“Parents, especially those working full time, feel guilty enough about not spending enough time with their kids. Add on the pressure of developing their literacy skills, it can be overwhelming for them. I am able to show them examples of how they are already helping their kids from simple things like singing in the car. They feel it’s silly, but I encourage them to do it, all the little things they do are helping their kids!” – Interview participant.*

#### **Objective 4: Encourage a love and appreciation of books, shared reading and life-long learning.**

**97%**

*Percentage indicated the program **met or exceeded their expectations** against this objective.*

*\*First 5 Forever Stakeholder survey results for this question are available in Appendix 5. (sample size, n=100).*

The program was deemed to be highly successful against this objective, with participants implanted with positive outlook towards reading for the rest of their learning journey. There was high agreement this occurred, with 97% of survey participants stating the program met or exceeded their expectations against this objective. The program was able to achieve this by increasing parent involvement, creating a nurturing environment for parents and caregivers and linking families to their local libraries resources.

#### **Learning together**

By changing the delivery of the program from passive to active learning, parents and caregivers have become more engaged in the sessions, participating in the activities with their children rather than taking a back seat. This change in engagement has created a positive learning environment for parents and caregivers to spend time with their child. Creating this environment has helped to bring back the enjoyment of reading whilst also allowing parents and caregivers to feel great that they are helping their child develop their literacy skills.

*“Before the program we used to have parents come along and sit at the back of the room on their phone. Now we have parents sitting at the front of the room with their children joining in. I even have parents who bring their children around 3-4 years old along and they have a baby in a pram, I tell them to get the baby and they can join in too. This program is for everyone!”- Interview participant.*

## Supporting parents and caregivers

Public library staff highlighted the importance of ensuring parents and caregivers feel supported when seeking information or advice about how they can help develop their child's literacy skills. Many have focused on creating a nurturing and supportive community within their public libraries, allowing parents and caregivers the space to experiment and explore learning techniques that they feel comfortable using when they are working with their child.

*"It has provided a venue for support for isolated families when dealing with young children and their development, especially with their speech." – Online survey participant.*

## Linkage to library resources

The existing collection of literacy resources housed in public libraries meant that they were an ideal location to run the program. The program was able to utilise the collections of children's books and the expertise of public library staff, as were the families who brought their children to sessions. Having these sessions in public libraries meant families could not only participate in sessions, but also had access to books they could take home to continue the reading journey with their children.

*"For every half hour session, we actually schedule three hours of staff time. That's to include planning of the session, delivery of the session and then hanging around and talking to parents about books." – Interview participant.*

## Objective 5: Increase access of children and families to programs and resources that support early literacy outcomes.

95%

Percentage indicated the program **met or exceeded their expectations** against this objective.

*\*First 5 Forever Stakeholder survey results for this question are available in Appendix 5. (sample size, n=100).*

Throughout the 2015-2018 program period there has been a steady growth in attendance at First 5 Forever sessions. This has led to 95% of survey participants agreeing that the program met or exceeded objectives against this objective. The growth in attendance has been maintained by libraries increasing community awareness of the First 5 Forever brand through conducting outreach activity.

## Attendance

Since the commencement of the First 5 Forever program, public libraries have seen a significant increase in the number of attendees. This increase in attendance at sessions has re-framed the public library as a place for parents and caregivers to take their children. The increase indicates the value parents and caregivers have found

from attending and participating in the First 5 Forever program. Amongst public library or council staff involved with the program 83% strongly agreed or agreed the program resulted in more early childhood sessions being run in libraries (Appendix 3).

	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>No. of in-library First 5 Forever sessions</b>	20.8K	21.6K	30.4K	32.3K
<b>No. of attendances to in-library sessions</b>	444.6K	455.8K	791.1K	873.2K

*“We wanted to double our offering of children’s early literacy sessions over a four-year period. So, we thought we would get to the end of that four-year period and have double - I think we did that in six months.” – Interview participant.*

### **Facilitating inter-library conversations**

First 5 Forever has provided an avenue for parents and caregivers to access free and quality early childhood literacy programs and participation has greatly increased across the state since introduction. It has also been observed that the increase in early childhood literacy session’s in public libraries across Queensland has been variable across the state. With participation increasing during the program period at a more significant rate amongst regional councils than metro council areas.

No. of attendances to in-library sessions	2015	2016	2017	2018	Increase 2015 to 2018
<b>Regional</b>	147k	225k	348k	400k	<b>172%</b>
<b>Metro</b>	335k	314k	559k	618k	<b>84%</b>

The larger increase in participation in regional areas is patently a positive success of the program. This result does go some way to explaining the feeling of under resourcing and difficulty accessing funding expressed by some regional council based staff during qualitative interviewing.

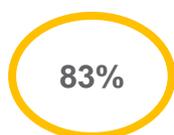
### **Outreach**

Outreach was a successful tool for many libraries as it brought attention to the First 5 Forever program and the activities available at libraries for young families. For many public libraries it was seen as a key mechanism for reaching non-traditional public library user groups. Outreach helped bring new people to the public library and helped public libraries connect First 5 Forever to other activities relevant to young Queensland

families. A commonly mentioned example of this was local mothers groups and primary schools, however more unanticipated examples of this including council pools and parks. Amongst survey participants 94% strongly agreed or agreed it had increased awareness in the community (Appendix 3).

	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Outreach Sessions</b>	1.1K	8.0K	3.5K	3.7K
<b>Outreach Attendances</b>	38.5K	87.7K	116.1K	144.4K

**Objective 6: Increase collaboration with key stakeholders to decrease gaps across existing services, reduce duplication and promote effective delivery for families of children aged 0-5 years.**



Percentage indicated the program **met or exceeded their expectations** against this objective.

*\*First 5 Forever Stakeholder survey results for this question are available in Appendix 5. (sample size, n=100).*

The establishment of a state-wide program for children’s literacy sessions in Queensland public libraries required strong centralised coordination. The achievement of this objective was primarily driven by the local library partnership with the State library of Queensland and the streamlining of public library activity that resulted from the program’s introduction. In the survey conducted with staff involved with the program, there was very positive feedback to both the overall partnership with State Library of Queensland (66%, 9 or 10/10) and the value of the relationship to their organisation (91%, 9 or 10/10).

### **Streamline library delivery**

Prior to the program’s introduction there was varying work being undertaken in public libraries to facilitate childhood programs. The First 5 Forever program brought public libraries together and helped to create the program that it is today. By utilising existing resources and tools whilst incorporating learnings from across different regions, public libraries were able to streamline the delivery of the First 5 Forever program in a cost-effective manner.

*“Being able to have a standard ongoing resource means we can focus on delivering the very important message of early literacy, rather than wasting local resources on creating programs. Collaboration and resource sharing always makes for a better outcome.” – Online survey participant.*

# Program strengths.

## **Breaking down isolation for parents, caregivers and children**

Parents and caregivers felt more comfortable approaching and participating in public library literacy programs compared to the often more formal education programs available for toddlers. A key reason for this was the relaxed and inclusive nature of the First 5 Forever program. Due to this, library staff felt they were better able to engage with and encourage participation amongst parents and caregivers. This outcome has been achieved through breaking down the isolation experienced by many parents and caregivers when it comes to supporting their child's literacy development during this life stage.

A further example of how the program broke down isolation amongst parents and caregivers is through the program's outreach component. Outreach has been a successful tool for connecting with non-library users via linking First 5 Forever to other activities relevant to the target demographic, such as local mothers' groups. This has connected early literacy initiatives with parents, caregivers and children who would not usually interact with a program like this.

*"It has helped bring families who would otherwise avoid library services into our reach. It has also somewhat enabled us to do outreach to more isolated, vulnerable families." – Online survey participant.*

First 5 Forever has created spaces in public libraries where parents and caregivers feel comfortable participating in literacy activities with their children. Many stakeholders stress the importance of the accessibility of the program: particularly that no financial payment is required to participate as a central reason for the level of participation and attendance experienced.

*"The program has created an inclusive welcoming space for people of any background to participate in." – Online survey participant.*

Key to First 5 Forever achieving its objective of increasing the early childhood literacy outcomes across the state was increasing the confidence and skills of parents and caregivers in incorporating literacy learning experiences in their everyday lives. Families exposed to the program gained a higher appreciation for the importance of reading, singing and connecting with their toddler or baby. A consistent theme of the interviews conducted is that the First 5 Forever program was successful at teaching parents this due to the simple, clear and easily actionable message of the program.

There were two key stages of understanding for ensuring program participation, both underpinned by communication.

1. Communicating how important the pre-schooling years are for children's brain development.
2. Communicating how parents and caregivers can act as an educator and why they are the right person to do so.

*"I love that the content of our sessions is now as much about giving parents some tools to use at home to read/play/sing with their kids at home as it is about Story Time in the libraries." – Online survey participant.*

### **Making early literacy resources accessible to those who may not have accessed them in the past**

First 5 Forever leveraged the existing perceptions of public libraries to encourage parents and caregivers to consider these spaces as valuable assets for increasing their child's literacy. The natural association of reading and literacy, coupled with the extensive promotion of the program and its focus on the importance of early literacy, helped position libraries as a key location for child development amongst non-users.

*"Libraries are not a place to read books anymore. I mean, they are, but they are also so much more than that. They are a community hub where anyone can go. Long gone are the days of 'shhh it's a library' - let's make noise and play!"- Online survey participant.*

*"Libraries are welcoming neutral spaces to allow people of diverse backgrounds to come together if they wish to. It enables everyone to use resources to improve their education." – Online survey participant.*

### **Adequate resourcing in local areas**

Key to the success of the First 5 Forever program was the increase in funding received by public libraries. This in turn increased the ability for public libraries to deliver early literacy activities internally, and externally through outreach programs. The funding was crucial to the program's success, as many public libraries did not have the necessary skills or resources to implement such an extensive program on their own.

Libraries were given some autonomy in utilising funding: some prioritised staffing to assist with the development and delivery of the program, while others used the funding to further the reach of the program into the community. Providing this autonomy to public libraries enabled them to assess the program as they saw fit and make relevant decisions for their own local community. This was particularly important for rural and regional areas who did not receive a sizeable funding amount.

*"We really wanted to make the money stretch as far as we could. Given we are a smaller area we didn't receive as much funding as some other more populous areas."- Interview participant.*

## ***Improving the confidence of staff in delivering early literacy programs***

The First 5 Forever program has led to an increased confidence amongst library staff in their ability to deliver early childhood literacy sessions. The program's training materials have been received well by public library staff involved with the program. Stakeholders reported witnessing an increase in confidence and an improved knowledge of early childhood education amongst staff delivering the program. This was encapsulated in a reported shift from staff 'presenting' a listen along session prior to the program, to now 'facilitating and performing' these sessions in an engaging manner.

*"We are seeing people who are naturally introverted now getting up in front of a group of people and embracing the philosophy of the program. Everyone is engaged, everyone is learning, and everyone is having fun." – Interview participant.*

# Program opportunities.

Through the series of stakeholder interviews, a small number of aspects surrounding the structure of the program were raised as a pain point or a program opportunity. In most cases, these did not influence stakeholders overall positive opinion of the First 5 Forever program. Opportunities for restructuring of the program have been summarised in the below.

- ***Initial consultation and Service Level Agreement***
- ***Managing State Library of Queensland vs. Council expectations***
- ***Development and inconsistencies in outreach***
- ***Facilitating inter-library conversations***

## ***Initial consultation and Service Level Agreement.***

Many of the interviewees felt that there was a requirement for more consideration and consultation on how the program would be implemented prior to the commencement. It was suggested that there needed to be more consideration about the delivery of the program when it first commenced. This was particularly around the requirements of the Service Level Agreement (SLA), more guidance on how to initiate the program during commencement, and consulting with public libraries on decision making and practicality of requirements.

*“I don’t think they listened right from the start. In the initial set up they would have benefitted from a working group of public librarians, and a young people’s team to help them make decisions - not only in the city but in regional areas too.” – Interview participant.*

Prior to the implementation of First 5 Forever sessions, most public libraries held toddler based Story Time sessions conducted by young people’s librarians. Given this, some public library managers also reported that another challenge they faced was the competition the First 5 Forever program brought to these existing programs. Some legacy initiatives and alternative programs overlapped with, or complimented, the purpose of the First 5 Forever program. The staff running these legacy programs could have been utilised through consultation in the development stage of the program, in order to share their insight and experience on best practice approaches to delivering programs through public libraries.

## ***Funding***

The funding relationship of the program meant that State Library of Queensland acknowledged that councils know their communities best and should have a say in how their allocated funding is spent. However, councils found some elements of the SLA ambiguous. This resulted in councils finding it difficult to ‘know where to start’

when planning on how to utilise their funding. This originated from confusion around the scope for spending of funds and resulted in the initial setup phase of the program taking two separate directions. It resulted in:

1. some councils using First 5 Forever funding to purchase resources that were outside the parameters specified in the SLA, or
2. other councils not purchasing valuable resources that were within the funding scope.

### **State vs. council requirements**

Given the joint running of this program, some council staff and public library staff reported experiencing difficulties managing council expectations and requirements.

From the perspective of some public library staff, particularly those from small and medium sized councils, designing and implementing a large-scale project such as First 5 Forever was not something they had previously done. Difficulties arose when it came to aligning guidelines and processes. This included maintaining consistent style and brand guidelines.

There was also a reported disconnect between expectations placed on public library program managers regarding how funds would be utilised. For example, things such as toolkits may have been an expected acquisition from the perspective of the State Library of Queensland. Some public library managers experienced difficulties meeting those expectations, as they had council procurement processes to follow. For example, some councils required multiple quotes for resource purchases due to their internal procurement process, regardless that toolkits were centrally procured by the State Library of Queensland.

*“We had the branding guidelines for State Government but trying to push that through with our own branding guidelines, well that was always a political nightmare and we were always caught in the middle.” - Interview participant.*

From the perspective of the State Library of Queensland, there was also a requirement for more frontline acknowledgement of the funding provided by the State Government, particularly for logos and branding templates to be implemented consistently. This sometimes clashed with council objectives of promoting the wider library services they offer. There was concern that Local Government was not recognising the State Government contribution to the program when it came to consistent branding for First 5 Forever marketing material that was vital for recognition and legitimacy of the program.

### **Development of outreach**

The outreach of public libraries has been highlighted as one of the many key successes of the program, however, some public library staff reported that there were inconsistencies in the development of outreach. A small level of disconnect between public library staff and outreach staff delivering the program has been experienced, often driven by ambiguity around the importance and purpose of outreach programs. This has caused some perplexity around appropriate prioritisation and distribution of resources. It should be noted that this was not a consistently reported issue for all public libraries, however some require more guidance on what is included in the remit of the First 5 Forever program.

*“There is some confusion between the library staff and the outreach staff about each other’s purpose. This has resulted in some library staff not wanting to share resources with the outreach staff and vice versa.” – Interview participant.*

### **Facilitating inter-library conversations**

A key challenge for the program team and participating public libraries was developing conversations across the breadth of public libraries participating in the program. Many public library staff expressed a need for more frequent and timely communication from the State Library of Queensland team, particularly in the early stage of the program. This would have helped public libraries verify the implementation of initiatives in line with the state-wide program. Increased communication from State Library of Queensland may have ensured a more consistent application of the First 5 principles across the state.

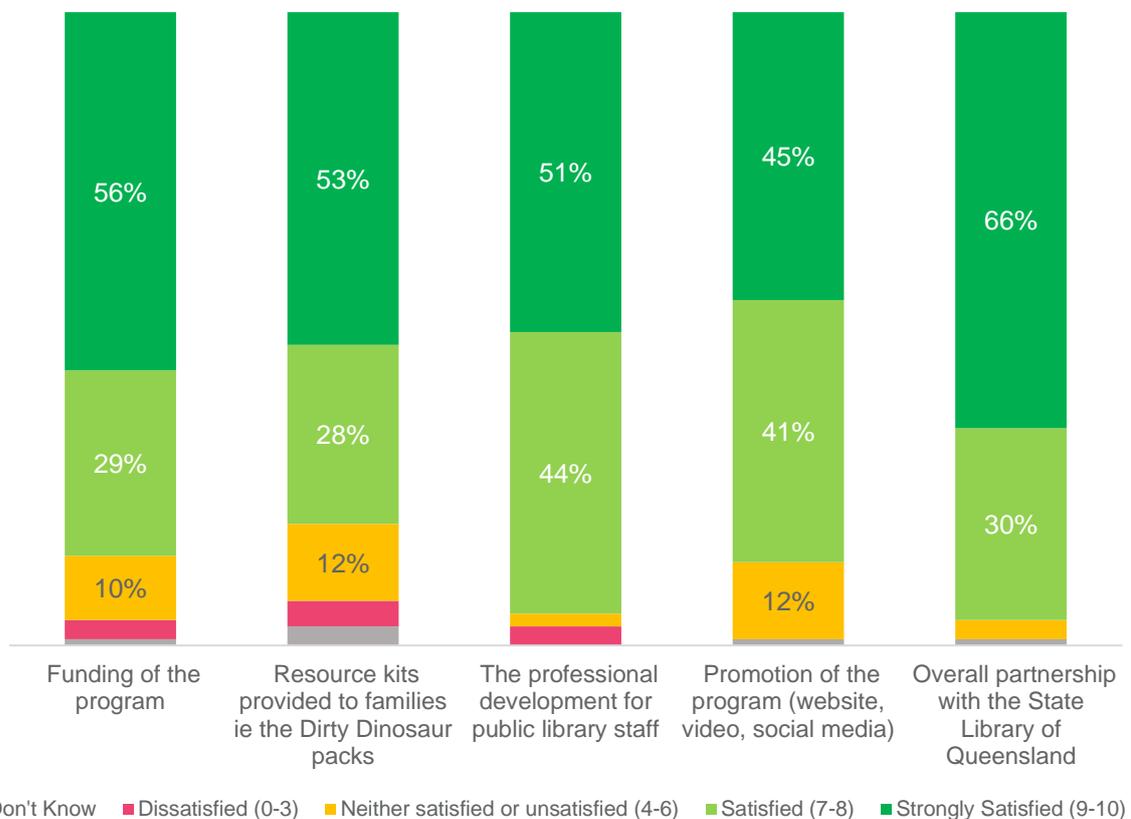
Future programming out of the State Library of Queensland should consider increasing resourcing for their staff during any early stages of new initiatives. Many highlight the positive communication and collaboration experiences facilitated via the First 5 Forever Facebook group: further utilisation of this knowledge sharing platform should be explored.

# Appendix-Results of the First 5 Forever Stakeholder Survey.

## Appendix 1: Satisfaction with the First 5 Forever program

Satisfaction with all elements of the First 5 Forever program was extremely high. First 5 Forever library and council staff are predominantly strongly satisfied with the overall partnership.

First 5 Forever Program Satisfaction



Base: Library coordinators, library facilitators or council staff involved with First 5 Forever during (2015-2018).  
 Sample: n=99 (those aware of state funding relationship).  
 Question: A2. Please rate how satisfied you are with the following elements of your partnership with the State Library of Queensland regarding the First 5 Forever program?

## Appendix 2: Satisfaction with State Library of Queensland Partnership

The partnership with the State Library of Queensland is highly valuable to public libraries across Queensland.

### Value of the State Library Partnership



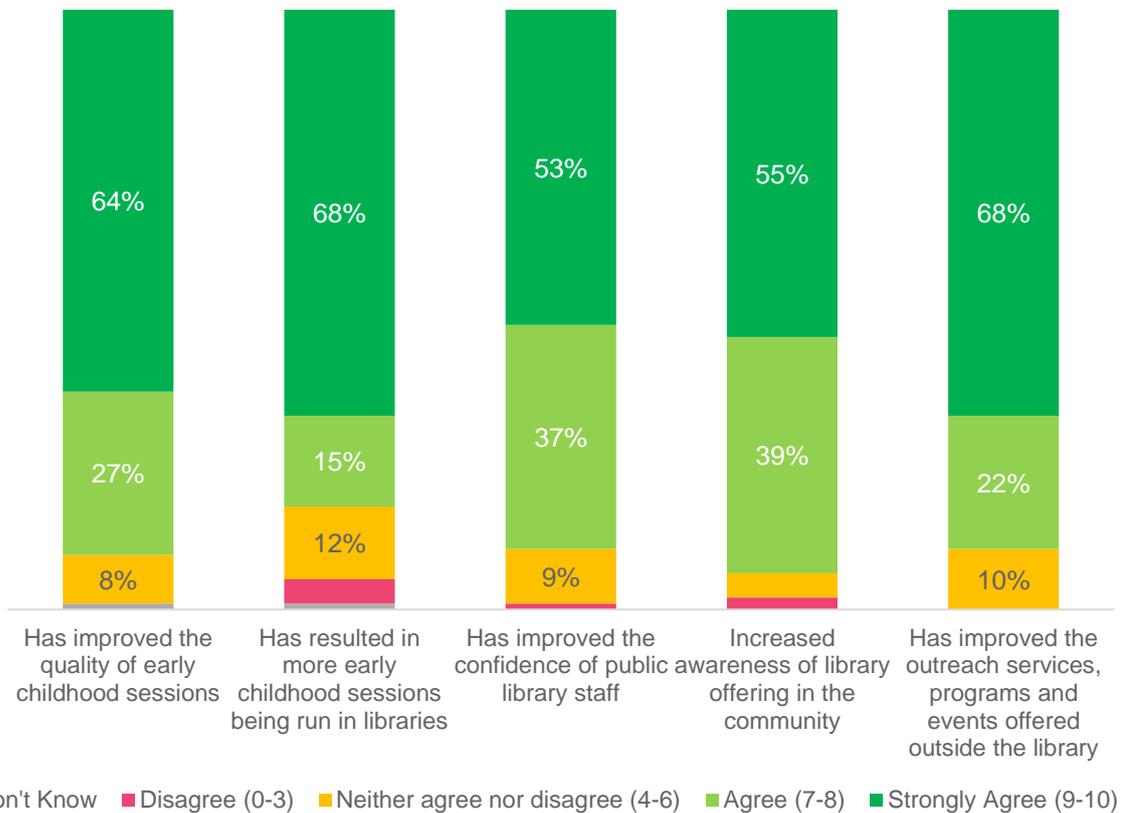
■ Moderately agree to disagree (0-7) ■ Agree (8) ■ Strongly Agree (9) ■ Very Strongly Agree (10)

*Base: Library coordinators, library facilitators or council staff involved with First 5 Forever during (2015-2018).  
Sample: n=99 (those aware of state funding relationship).  
Question: A3. And how strongly do you agree with the following statement?... The partnership with the State Library of Queensland is valuable to our organisation.*

### Appendix 3: Agreement with First 5 Forever Outcomes.

Across the board, there is strong agreement that the program is driving outcomes in local communities.

#### First 5 Forever Outcomes



Base: Library coordinators, library facilitators or council staff involved with First 5 Forever during (2015-2018). Sample: n=99 (those aware of state funding relationship).

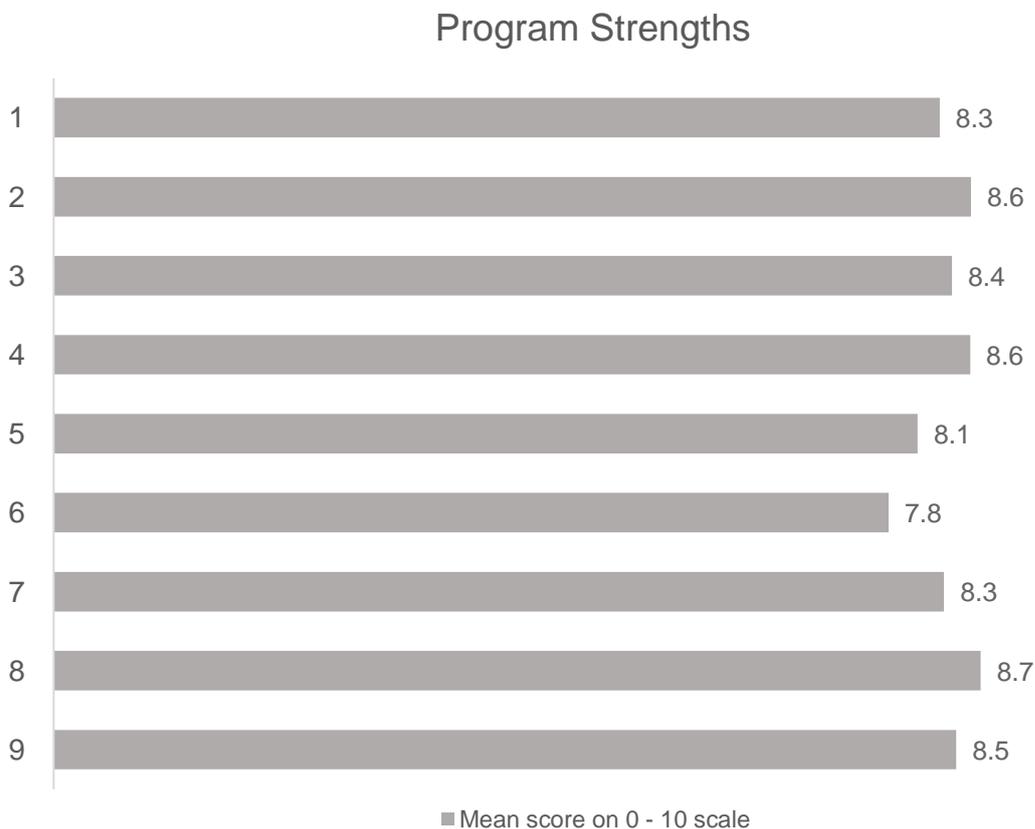
Question: A5 Thinking about your experiences with the First 5 Forever program in your library, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. The First 5 Forever program.....

## Appendix 4: Agreement with First 5 Forever Strengths.

There is strong agreement that the program delivered on each of the strengths tested below. However, there is room for some improvement in increasing collaboration between public libraries across Queensland.

1. *Breaks down isolation for parents, caregivers and children.*
2. *Has taught families the value of reading, talking, playing and singing with their children from birth.*
3. *Has made early literacy resources accessible to those who may not have accessed it in the past.*
4. *Is contributing to better early childhood wellbeing in Queensland.*
5. *Has been adequately resourced in my local area.*
6. *Increased collaboration between public libraries across the state.*
7. *Has improved the confidence of staff in delivering early literacy programs.*
8. *Has had a positive impact on the parents, caregivers and children in my local area.*
9. *Raised community awareness of the importance of the first five years for children – especially the impact of early childhood on language, communication and early*

Base: Library coordinators, library facilitators or council staff involved with First 5 Forever during (2015-2018).



Sample: minimum n=88 (excludes 'Don't know')

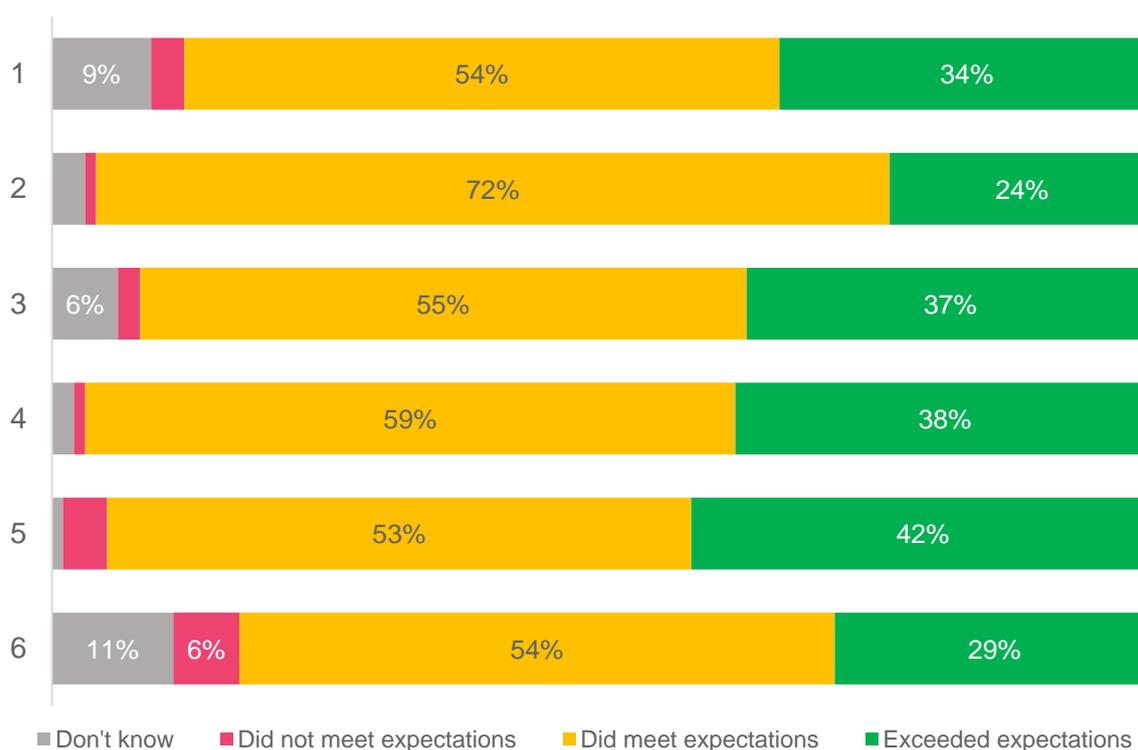
Question: B1. Thinking about your experiences with the First 5 Forever program, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

## Appendix 5: First 5 Forever performance against goals.

Library and Council staff involved with First 5 Forever during 2015-2018, were asked how the program performed against its intended goals. Respondents were asked whether the program 'did not meet', 'did meet expectations' or 'exceeded expectations'. The results highlighted a strong agreement towards the program either meeting or exceeding expectations

1. *Harnessed the existing network of libraries and IKCs across the state to further enhance their ability to directly connect with families by supporting them to provide quality programs, outreach services and maintain and establish sustainable partnerships.*
2. *Raised community awareness of the importance of the first five years for children, especially the impact of early childhood on language, communication and early literacy.*
3. *Increased parent, carer and community motivation, confidence and capacity to realise children's potential in language, communication and early literacy.*
4. *Encouraged a love and appreciation of books, shared reading and life-long learning.*
5. *Increased access of children and families to programs and resources that support early literacy outcomes.*
6. *Increased collaboration with key stakeholders to decrease gaps across existing services, reduce duplication and promote effective delivery for families of children aged 0-5 years.*

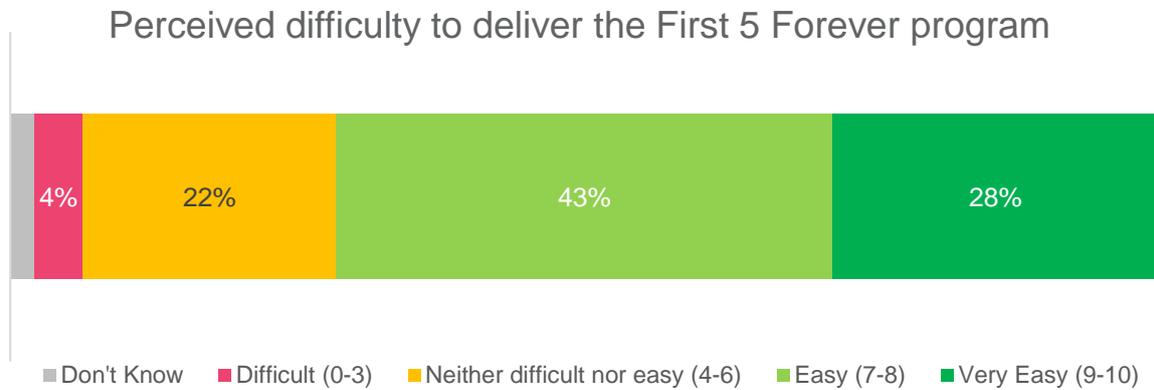
### Performance against program goals



Base: Library coordinators, library facilitators or council staff involved with First 5 Forever during (2015-2018).  
 Sample: n=100  
 Question: B3. Below are the six First Five Forever program goals. Please indicate how you think the program performed against each of these goals between 2015 and 2018. The First 5 Forever program...

## Appendix 6: Ease of First 5 Forever Delivery.

First 5 Forever staff felt that the First 5 Forever program was easy to deliver in their local area.



Base: Library coordinators, library facilitators or council staff involved with First 5 Forever during (2015-2018).

Sample: n=95

Question: B5 - And how easy would you say it was to deliver the First 5 Forever program through this number of libraries in your local area?