

raising
literacy
AUSTRALIA

Annual Report
2020/2021





Contact Us

Telephone: 08 8331 3095

Email: admin@raisingliteracy.org.au

Address: Polomka Lane, Norwood SA 5067

PO Box 147, Kent Town SA 5071

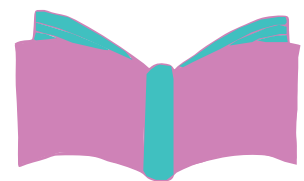
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Our Board

Peter Withy,
Chair

Matthew Holden,
Treasurer and Deputy Chair

Melvin Mansell,
Board Member

Ruth Blenkiron,
Board Member (past member)

Lisa Pritchard,
Board Member

Juliette East,
Board Member

Our Team

Sue Hill,
Chief Executive Officer

Belinda Spry,
Director, Professional Learning

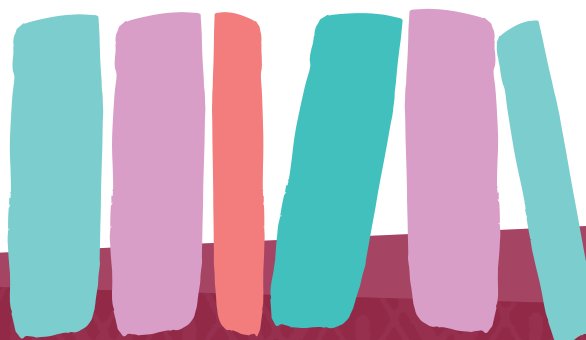
Julia Jones,
Director, Early Years

Janet Leske,
Manager, Read to Me &
Community Programs

Fiona Bowden,
Manager, Little Book Press

Brodie Evitts,
Professional Development Officer

Josephine Gaskell,
Project Officer



Who is Raising Literacy Australia?

Raising Literacy Australia (RLA) is a not-for-profit organisation committed to enriching Australian children's lives through everyday literacy. Through our programs, we support families and the early childhood sector to read, talk, play and sing with their children every day from birth.

We provide reading packs, books, professional learning and training and resources that support the early childhood sector and families to nurture children's development and establish a love of reading and lifelong learning.

Since 2006 RLA have established picture book libraries in vulnerable communities, created new picture books for our free Reading Pack program and gifted over 2.5 million books to South Australian families.

Our vision

Enriching Australian lives through literacy.

Our mission

Develop and implement multi tiered programs and services that support families to positively engage with their children every day through reading, talking, singing and playing from birth.



Chair's Report

Once upon a time...

Are these the four most exciting words in the English language to a child?

They signal a story, a sharing of time with someone they love, fun, escape, and unbeknownst to them, learning.

Books and stories are the first learning tools for children between 0 and 5 and that's where RLA comes in.

Our role is to ensure as many children and families as possible have access to books.

While I know this is perhaps an untraditional opening to a Chair report, I think we should never lose sight of why we are here.

I have been Chair since February 2021 so much of the last financial year was under the purview of Ceinwyn Elleway and some now-departed board members who did an excellent job in positioning the organisation for positive evolution.

So, an official thank you to Ceinwyn, Paula Davies and Devita Pathi for their excellent contributions to RLA.

It is overly simplistic to say we simply provide books to children and families. Within that falls three business arms: development of programmes around each age subgroup, training of people nationally in understanding early childhood brain development and every day literacy practices and commissioning and providing the physical books through our Little Book Press.

Three business streams each looking to their own funding and managed by the CEO, Sue Hill, and her team of seven people. This is not a literal; a team of seven look after this wide scope of works. Sue and her team have rewritten the meaning of 'running on the smell of an oil rag' and the Board and I applaud their efforts.

Add to their list of duties, the formation and management of the 0-3 Taskforce commissioned by Department for Education SA, spearheaded by Kate Ellis. The main objective of the Taskforce is to work together with SA Government and Non Government Organisation's to develop and pilot consistent parent messaging to support families during the first three years.

The new Board is working with the RLA team where our skills can be of service; it is not a Board that merely pontificates, it is a Board that participates.

The current Board is Matthew Holden (Deputy Chair), Juliette East, Melvin Mansell and Lisa Pritchard.

I would like to thank them publicly for their wise counsel, their dedication and selfless enthusiasm. No NGO/NFP could wish a better board.

Peter Withy
Chair

Australian Adult Literacy Levels

Recent ABS data 2011/12 (4228.0) states that approximately 7.3 million Australians, which is about 44% of people aged between 15 and 74, do not have sufficient literacy skills to meet all of the complex demands of everyday life and work in a modern economy.

For many, being able to read a shopping list, a recipe, medicine instructions, a timetable, a menu, or to help

a child with homework or share a story, are incredibly difficult tasks they will face each and every day. More complex tasks such as applying for a loan, completing further studies, voting, understanding safety information or gaining a driver's license are monumentally challenging.

Almost all of these adults would have been identified through their schooling years, as having difficulties and

challenges with reading, writing and comprehension. Yet somehow, they have gone unsupported and been left to struggle each and every day. Seeking support to learn to read as an adult is not just confronting and incredibly difficult but takes immense motivation and time commitment to persevere and 're program your brain' with the simplest literacy skills.

We must, and can, do better.



CEO Report

The year that was!

What a challenging year for all, businesses, families, carers, individuals and not for profit organisations.

In 2020 our organisation implemented a major change in the delivery of its professional learning and training programs, shifting to an online format in the wake of COVID-19 and subsequent border restrictions. The change enabled a more efficient sector reach across regional areas and interstate, including widespread delivery across Victoria.

Our learning programs are constantly being adapted in line with new research on early education and literacy. By keeping abreast with current research, we can fill any gaps within the sector thus supporting practitioners and educators with practical skills to meet the specific needs of child development in the early years.

As research tells us, language is one of the strongest predictors of future success which is why Raising Literacy strives to reach as many families and children as possible during those first

five formative years to give them the best foundations for school readiness and lifelong learning.

Our programs continue to have impact with families across South Australia with 65,000 FREE Reading packs given to families with babies, toddlers, and pre-schoolers. The response from services delivering the packs direct to families continues to be incredibly positive. Services include Immunisation clinics, General Practitioners, Women's Children's Premature Unit, Helen Mayo House, Refugee Association and Child and Family Health Nurses to name a few. Over 300 services and 1200 sites throughout 2020/21 distributed the FREE packs direct to SA families.

In October 2021 we undertook a Preschool Survey with 183 Preschool Directors responding. The statistics received are testament to our program with 98% directors stating the packs and the picture books, STEM activity books and Facetime vs Screen Time brochure are all having impact with their families. Even more heartening is after five years the Preschools are embedding the picture

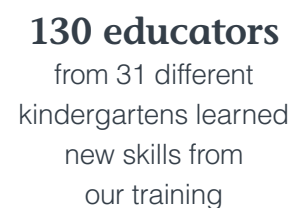
books and activities from the reading packs into their every day literacy programs as well as giving the Preschool Directors a tool to open conversations with families on their early engagement and home reading practices with their child. These are outstanding results.

The team I work with are hardworking, dedicated, and knowledgeable. It is their enthusiasm and commitment to support and help families to engage positively with their children, that enables RLA to produce such great programs, services, and resources.

Lastly, I pay tribute to our funders, founding partners News Corp Australia and the Department for Education and our program partners Variety SA, Carthew Foundation and Cochrane's Transport. Without their ongoing and substantial support, we would not exist. Thank you!

Sussan Hill,
Chief Executive Officer

Our Year at a Glance



Stories from Our Programs

*The young girls love the Handa books.
They never see their own faces
in books or on TV.
They are a beautiful addition to
the already wonderful library.*

Kate Spanner,
Refugee Child Health Nurse



*This initiative helped me to develop my own artistic
practice giving me a greater understanding of how
to share visual concepts in multiple formats.*

Ross Morgan, illustrator part of the
Author and Illustrator Mentoring Initiative

*I never used to give my son a book, I thought he was too young
until I got the book pack. He loves his book we read every day.*

Mother and participant of the
Building Home Libraries program



*It is always a joy to give each family their pack and to
see the looks on both parent and child's face. They are truly
grateful firstly for just receiving the pack then thankful that
the pack contains books and resources that they can
go away and create something at home.*

2020 Preschool Reading Packs survey response

Our Programs and Professional Learning in 2020 and 2021

2021 State-wide Reading Pack program

65,000 FREE Reading packs distributed direct to families.



Building Home Libraries

An early engagement program which provides monthly resources and role modelling to families on positive engagement with their children through every day literacy practices such as reading, talking, singing and playing.



Read To Me

The Read to Me book gifting program continues to support children in care to improve their reading and language skills and is a vital source of information and resources for carers across South Australia. The program recognises that children in care often have limited access to quality age-appropriate books and encourages positive

adult-child interactions to support healthy brain development.

Each child from birth to six years automatically receives free books and resources, creating a library that they can keep and enjoy for many years to come.



Professional Learning

We provide professional learning through a series of learning modules and workshops which integrate literacy rich practices in the home, schools and community services.

Our professional learning modules and workshops incorporate evidence-based research and effective hands-on methods.

Areas of learning include:

- Building Foundations for Early Learning

- Inclusive Literacy Practices
- Developing Oral Language
- Language Development through STEM
- In 2020/21 we delivered over 30 workshops with 750 participants



Community Sharing Libraries

Raising Literacy Australia worked with the Department for Education to provide Community Sharing Libraries to Children's Centres and Preschools across South Australia.

An expression of interest was sent out to Preschools and

Children's Centres in South Australia, where the 2018 AEDC data percentage of vulnerability in language and cognitive skills were higher than the national average.

Overall 24 libraries was distributed to centres across SA. With 19 large libraries'

consisting of 650 plus books and resources and 5 smaller libraries of 450 plus books and resources out to communities to ensure services were able to resource families with quality books and activities.

Consultation

In 2020 RLA was engaged to develop Public Library of South Australia Literacy Framework.

The developed Framework for Public Libraries in South Australia clearly states goals and long term outcomes, identifying strategies for the library network. It identifies the key areas underpinning opportunity to access literacy and learning experiences.

This ensures consistent, evidence-based approaches, while being able to showcase best practice, inform new program development, and identify areas requiring additional support.

It clarifies and consolidates, as well as extending and future proofing, the key role of public libraries in improving and embedding valuable literacy

practices and outcomes in our communities, for all South Australians from birth to seniors.

Through the Framework, public libraries will enhance their already strong role in developing literacy by providing further opportunities to support state goals to improve reading, writing and literacy in our communities.



Literacy – What, Why and How is it Important?

Literacy defined by UNESCO
“Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society (UNESCO, 2004; 2017).”

Do you take it for granted that you can read? How often do you stop to think about how understanding the written word has given you choice, health, relationships, independence, employment and opportunities? Regardless of who you are or what you want out of life, we all need literacy. And it starts with our brain.

We begin to develop our literacy skills while in-utero, through the formation of the brain and senses. Then the sounds we hear as babies start to prepare our brain for language-acquisition and eventually

speech. Hearing sounds, watching faces and being part of daily conversations in a nurturing environment builds strong brain connections. In time, we use the skills we’ve developed through talking, listening, and learning, to understand that those squiggles on a page are words which we decode and read. By the time a child is ready to learn to read the brain must have built and prepared a range of key areas through consistent use. It also helps significantly if a child has fallen in love with reading and sharing stories and is motivated to learn to be a ‘reader’. It will still take many years of schooling and practice to learn to master life changing literacy skills but having ‘primed’ the brain it will ease the way. So clearly literacy doesn’t start at school, or preschool. Research on young children from across every background and culture proves that it’s not just our genes. Rather, it’s everything we do on a regular basis throughout all these early years which is

critical for building our brains to be ready for talking, listening, reading, writing, interpreting, and comprehending.

We know that at the time a child starts school there are measures and indicators that will closely predict where they will be in their literacy and learning by the time, they enter Grade 3 and even Grade 5. So, providing families with information on the best ways to interact with their baby or toddler during the development window in the formative years is imperative. When families engage in regular reading, talking, singing and playing they provide the best foundations for all children, and build the pre-reading skills that prepare children for future learning. Not only that, but they are building numeracy skills, social emotional skills, helping physical development and deepening the loving bond between them and their child. They don’t need to start teaching children to read – instead they should focus on building a love of stories,

sharing songs and rhymes, introducing new words, and having lots of conversations back and forth. This is the best brain development (and therefore literacy development) that they can provide.

The path to a literate life is not straight forward for everyone and can be a challenging journey for some. Yet the benefits and opportunities

are immeasurable for those who persist and are able to succeed. When we focus on the incredible window of opportunity in the early years then we can make a significant difference to every child.

Every day life requires fundamental literacy skills. Literacy is the most essential skill and is the basis for all learning and communication

and sets our ability to choose our course in life. By working together, we are able to support effective change in practices, enabling Australians to achieve lifelong learning, improved life chances and the ability to participate in society.

Belinda Spry
RLA Director, Professional Learning



Winner of 2021 National Speech Pathology Award

Look Baby! by Janeen Brian and Renee Trembl

*Hey, baby, look at the sky!
A bright ball of sun and
cloud passing by.*

Look, Baby! written by Janeen Brian and illustrated by Renée Trembl, has been announced as Speech Pathology Australia's 2021 Book of Year, in the birth to three years category.

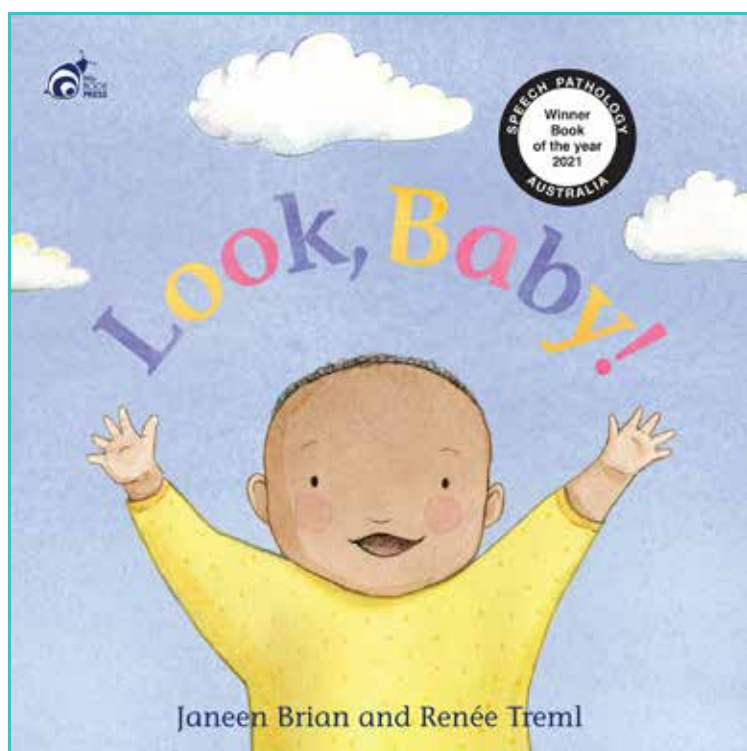
This year's awards attracted 248 nominees across five categories, a 14 per cent increase on the number submitted for judging in 2020.

Published by Little Book Press, Raising Literacy Australia's publishing house, Look, Baby! encourages children to take a closer look at the world around them, exploring nature, family and animals.

With a clever and engaging cut out design, rhythmic text and beautiful illustrations, the book offers an interactive way for parents to work together with their child to identify items throughout the story.

Raising Literacy is thrilled to have Look, Baby! recognised by Speech Pathology Australia and highlights the importance of developing children's literacy from birth through reading, talking, singing and playing.

The Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year Awards aim to promote children's books as literacy tools, as well as raising awareness of the role of speech pathologists play in helping children develop language and literacy skills. The awards, which first started eighteen years ago, cover five categories with books judged by a panel of experts, based on their appeal to children, interactive quality and ability to assist speech pathologists and parents in communication and literacy development.



Speech Pathology Australia, National President, Tim Kittel says “Look, Baby provides a wonderful resource for the birth to three years age group. Janeen and Renee have crafted a captivating story and Raising Literacy Australia should be commended for the impactful programs and books they’re delivering for the birth to five years age group”

Look, Baby! is the perfect tool for parents to introduce and talk about the world with their little one. The soft, repetitive rhyme helps babies and toddlers engage with the story and offers the opportunity to build listening, memory, and vocabulary skills and helps boost language proficiency from an early age.



About the Author

JANEEN BRIAN is an avid reader, primary school teacher and author of over 80 children's books. Janeen's books have been translated and won awards including CBCA Honour Awards for Where does Thursday go?, Hoosh! Camels in Australia and Pilawuk – When I was Young.

About the Illustrator

RENÉE TREML a Victorian based illustrator inspired by Australian animals and the environment. She has written and illustrated several picture books including the award-winning Once I Heard a Little Wombat and Wombat Big, Puggle Small.

Early Language and Literacy – Laying the Foundations.

The 'early years' of a child's life (from birth to five years of age) are a critical time for the development of children's speech, language and communication. These skills develop best in language rich environments, with quality interactions and exposure to the speech and language of others. Early communication skills are known to predict later social, emotional, educational and vocational achievement.

Reading with children from birth supports their language and social communication (such as eye contact, joint attention and turn taking) development. Books expose children to new ideas, vocabulary, images, and support development of imagination and curiosity.

The strong links between good listening, understanding, and speaking skills, and the successful acquisition of literacy, cannot be understated.

There is overwhelming evidence that many children are falling behind their peers in early language and literacy development before they start school. Right now, almost 23% of Australia's children are not developmentally on-track with their language skills when starting school. Language difficulties in preschool may predispose a child to ongoing reading difficulties throughout childhood and adolescence.



Oral language abilities are intrinsically related to the development of literacy. Language-rich environments, including exposure to books, in the early years of life provide opportunities for children to understand language, how to make sounds, combine them into words and ultimately into sentences. Children ‘tune in’ to the sounds, rhythm, and patterns of their language from birth. With their developing competence during the preschool years, they start to recognise and play with the patterns and sounds (phonological awareness) for example through rhyming. Children’s awareness of the separate sounds in words (phonemic awareness) then forms the basis for learning the written symbols (graphemes) that match those sounds (phoneme-grapheme awareness). This awareness forms the basis of the essential foundation for literacy learning in the early years of school.

The Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year awards aims to promote quality Australian books. The awards are for the “Best Book for Language and Literacy Development” across differing age categories. It is wonderful that two Little Book Press (Publishing House of Raising Literacy Australia) titles have recently had success – in 2019, *Let’s Go Strolling* by Katrina Germein and Danny Snell won the Birth to 3 Years category and in 2021, *Look, Baby!* by Janeen Brian and Renée Treml won the same category. This Book of the Year category, and these two winning books, support the development of early skills in listening to stories and expanding vocabulary and language, along with promoting to parents and carers, the importance of reading and interacting with babies and toddlers at this young age.

As an active member of the National Early Language and Literacy Coalition, Speech

Pathology Australia recognises the need for children’s early language and literacy development to be a national priority. The implications for those who fall behind in their early years can be significant.

Speech pathologists play an important role in this area, both in promotion and prevention initiatives and in providing support for children identified as being at risk. All children deserve the right support at the right time to ensure strong development of language, cognitive, social, and emotional skills. These underpinning competencies act as a foundation and predictor of later literacy and learning skills throughout life.

Given the relationship between strong literacy skills during childhood and later quality of life in adulthood, book reading with children has a positive and long-lasting impact.

Gail Mulcair,
Chief Executive Officer,
Speech Pathology Australia

Financial Report

Raising Literacy Australia Inc saw a small decrease in overall Income earned for the 2021 financial year, with increases in revenue from Grants, Donations & Sponsorships, and Workshops, being offset by reductions in Product Sales and Projects Commissioned.

It is noted that Covid-19 Stimulus measures provided \$105,810 of additional revenue, which was \$41,876 greater than the previous year.

Total Revenue of \$1,396,189 decreased from the previous year's total of \$1,411,951, a decrease of \$15,762 (-1.1%). It is acknowledged that last year represented the highest revenue generated by the organisation since inception, and therefore a modest decrease from this figure should be seen as a success overall.

Grants continue to provide the vast majority of income, being \$783,300 or 56.1%

of the total overall revenue and therefore organisation is still heavily reliant on these to continue, predominantly with the support of the South Australian State Government.

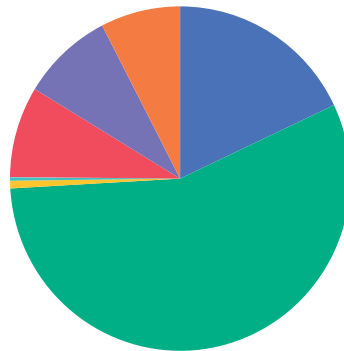
The large increase in Workshops income is an exceptional outcome and reward for many years of investment in this area.

A breakdown of the categories of Revenue follows:

INCOME	2021	2020	Variance
Product Sales	245,729	377,505	131,776
Grants	783,300	775,900	7,400
Donations & Sponsorships	10,040	3,294	- 6,746
Copyright	4,438	8,795	- 4,357
Interest	307	755	- 448
Workshops	124,780	18,503	106,277
Projects Commissioned	121,785	163,265	- 41,480
COVID-19 Stimulus	105,810	63,934	41,876
Total	1,396,189	1,411,951	-15,762

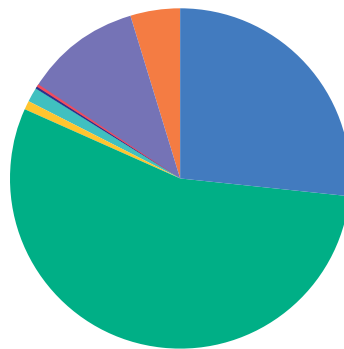
Breakdown of 2021 revenue

- Product sales
- Grants
- Donations and sponsorship
- Copyright
- Interest
- Workshops
- Projects commissioned
- COVID-19 Stimulus



Breakdown of 2020 revenue

- Product sales
- Grants
- Donations and sponsorship
- Copyright
- Interest
- Workshops
- Projects commissioned
- COVID-19 Stimulus



Overall, the small decrease in total Revenue should be considered successful given the current economic environment, with the uncertainty surrounding Covid-19 threatening to disrupt many of organisation's plans. We are thankful for the support

of the Federal and State Governments shown through this time.

The organisation is still heavily reliant on income from Grants, particularly from State Government sources. The impact of this will be felt in 2021-22 when Grants related to

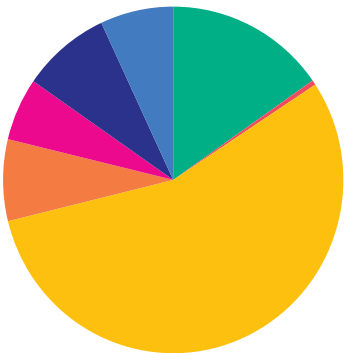
Toddler Reading Packs will not be received. The organisation is aware of this and continues to make progress to diversify other revenue sources to build a more sustainable model.

Expenditure

Expenditure increased for the year by \$7,704, which included reduction in Cost of Products Sold and Project Costs due to decreased Revenue activities in these areas.

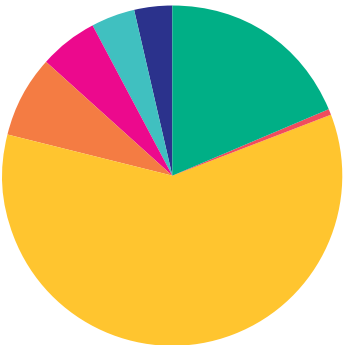
Breakdown of 2021 expenditure

- Cost of products sold
- Depreciation
- Project costs
- Employee benefits
- Occupancy costs
- Advertising
- Administration
- Other overheads



Breakdown of 2020 expenditure

- Cost of products sold
- Depreciation
- Project costs
- Employee benefits
- Occupancy costs
- Advertising
- Administration
- Other overheads



EXPENDITURE	2021	2020	Variance
Cost of Products Sold	186,264	227,785	- 41,521
Depreciation	5,504	4,954	550
Project Costs	747,448	725,1008	22,348
Employee Benefits	92,766	92,780	- 14
Occupancy Costs	71,407	68,744	2,663
Advertising	-	-	0
Administration	30,741	49,320	-18,579
Other Overheads	84,612	42,355	42,257
Total	1,218,742	1,211,038	7,704

Summary

After losses and volatility in previous years, it was pleasing to see the 2020 financial year result in a profit for Raising Literacy Australia Inc., and the following 2021 financial year continue that trend.

Given the challenges of Covid-19 that all organisations have had to deal with, particularly since March 2020, such a strong financial result is an achievement to be acknowledged and celebrated.

Cash position is currently healthy and therefore the organisation remains solvent.

The financial and business model of the organisation however results in unpredictable financial results due to narrow sources of large-scale revenue, such as State Government Grants, and the substantial costs attached to deliver these programs, along with managing the timing of the year when these occur.

We are already feeling the impact of loss of significant funding related to the Toddler Reading Packs.

As Raising Literacy Australia Inc proceeds through the impacts of Covid-19 and beyond to the “new normal” it will be important to maintain the financial disciplines and good practice to build a more sustainable business model and foundation for the security and success of the organisation.

Founding and Program Partners

We couldn't do what we do without a range of founding and program partners:

Founding partners

State Government of South Australia

News Corp, Australia

Program partners

Department for Education

Variety SA, the children's charity

Carthew Foundation

Cochrane's Transport

Program supporters

SA Dental

UnitingCare Wesley Bowden

Child and Family Health Service

Department for Child Protection

Department for Health and Wellbeing

James and Diana Ramsay Foundation



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