

Glencore champions reading and literacy for Indigenous youth in outback Queensland

The Books in Homes Program continues to enrich two remote Queensland Indigenous schools – Dajarra State School and Camooweal State School – thanks to Glencore’s ongoing generosity and support. Over 190 new quality books will be donated to each of the school libraries over the next four school terms, and the students at both schools will receive 12 books each. The students pick the books themselves so they are able to select titles they are inspired to read and can integrate them into their homes. The books cover four reading levels, including picture books, novels, non-fiction books, graphic novels and more. Of these books, 25% are written and / or illustrated by Indigenous creators.

Dajarra State School is a small, rural and remote community and is over 180 kilometres south west of Cloncurry, catering for 19 students from Kindergarten to Year 6. Dajarra State School is 93% Indigenous with 67% of students coming from a language background other than English. Camooweal State School is located 190km north-west of Mount Isa and is 13km east of the Northern Territory border. Camooweal State School has 36 students, of which 90% are Indigenous and 31% come from a language background other than English.

Glencore also sponsors six additional schools¹ in north west Queensland and has established itself as a strong proactive community leader. Through this program Glencore is helping to build the foundations of a literature-rich environment for children in their homes and schools, improving their potential for the future.

Indeed, “...study after study proves that physical access to books makes the difference. It affects young people’s reading achievement (Neuman & Celano, 2012) and their motivation to read (Guthrie, 2008). It might not be ground-breaking, but giving kids access to books remains one of the most important ways to ensure they attend school with the tools they need to be successful.”²

Acting Principal of Dajarra State School Zoe Hall spoke about the value of Glencore’s long-term association, as well as the value Glencore places on encouraging reading and literacy in Indigenous youth:

Our students live in a very remote part of Queensland, and accessing a local library is challenging and almost impossible. With the continued assistance from Glencore, our students have access to high quality engaging texts that promotes reading across all ages.

One particular conversation with a younger student still resonates with me about the importance of Glencore’s continued participation in encouraging reading and improving literacy skills of students. The conversation went as follows—

The student was looking at all the new Books in Homes Preview Pack books that Glencore had funded, and he was asked to select up to four books that he might like to take home. While he was walking around and browsing, I heard the him say to a friend, “I like this (book), but I can’t read it” and the child put the book back. This happened another three more times. When I questioned the child, about the comments I had overheard, the child replied, “I can’t read that book. It’s too hard for me, but I really want to read it.” I offered to help to the child. I said to the child, “How about I help you to read it at school and then you can practice it at home and read it to your mum.”

A few weeks passed by and then one morning a very excited child came busting into my office saying, “I did it, I did it, Mrs Hall!” Not sure what the child was talking about, I looked up from my desk. “I read this book to mum,” he said. He was so proud that he could read a book he thought was too hard for him. The sheer excitement on his face is one I will not forget for a long time. This is also a student who struggles to read and was disengaged, but who has now improved by six months in his reading level in one term because he was so thrilled to be reading the beautiful books supplied through the Books in Homes program via our Sponsor Glencore. With some help, he was able to finally read to his mum.

As educators, these are the moments we cherish the most. Without our students having the opportunity to take home books they are really interested in, the wonderful world of books would simply not exist. Glencore has helped many Dajarra State School students, but especially this one particular student who was struggling with his reading and who now has one of the most precious gifts a child could ever receive... the gift of learning and gaining confidence in himself through his love of reading.

Furthermore, Principal of Camooweal State School Vaunessa Parker says:

The students of Camooweal have pure delight on their faces when the Books in Homes brochure arrives into their classrooms. The Glencore Books in Homes Program has added value with an increase in the students' vocabulary and is also helping them become engaging 21st Century communicators.

The in-depth discussions the children share about which books they are choosing and why are a joy to listen to, as those discussions criss-cross to their peers, staff members, parents and our community. The love of reading has also increased the students' knowledge and helped them learn more about the wider world. This, in turn, has led our students to think, act and speak with clear and profound insights into topics and to build their cognitive functions.

Thank you, Glencore, for your support in building our school community, out of the love of reading.

Glencore's 2020-2021 funding of Dajarra and Camooweal is part of a greater five-year sponsorship plan that will bring 3,237 books-of-choice in total to the children enrolled in those two schools, 1,440 books for the two school libraries, and an additional 180 books for improved attendance, excellent citizenship, accelerated reading results and for children who are generally "Caught Being Good".

Glencore first started funding Books in Homes in 2007, with the aim of encouraging educational development in the most critical foundational skills—reading and literacy. Glencore has also committed to continue funding for this program, in the communities in which they operate, until 2023. By 2023 they will have donated over \$1.62 million and provided over 206,000 books to schools through the Books in Homes program. Of those 206,000 books, almost 180,000 books-of-choice will go directly to children via the 60,000 student orders delivered to the participating children, benefitting them, their families and their communities. This is an extraordinary feat and an unprecedented corporate commitment to children living in remote and rural communities.

Thank you and congratulations, Glencore, for your outstanding contribution to your community and for helping build a better future for so many young Australians.

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REFERENCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

1 Mount Isa Central State School; Sunset State School; Townview State School; Healy State School; Cloncurry State School; and St Joseph's School, Cloncurry.

2 Miller, D., & Sharp, C. (2018). *Game Changer: Book Access for All Kids*. New York, NY: Scholastic Professional (p8).

OTHER REFERENCES MENTIONED IN THE QUOTE

Guthrie, J.T. (2008). *Engaging Adolescents in Reading*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Neuman, S.B., & Celano, D. (2012). Giving our children a fighting chance: Poverty, literacy, and the development of information capital, New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

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