

# **My Town Your Town Evaluation**

## **Nathalia, 22 May 2007**

Report Written by: Janet Congues  
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### **Introduction**

The partnership between Nathalia and District Hospital and St Francis Primary School came about incidentally.

Tanya Holt, Health Promotions Officer and Janet Congues, Library Assistant, came into discussion. Tanya had the money, Janet had the idea and together in league with a number of different sectors of the community they enabled a wonderful event to take place that not only provided enjoyment and socialization, but gave impetus to the benefits of reading and writing.

### **Project Aims**

1. Promote literacy within the community
2. Provide a healthy link between parents and children and literacy
3. Provide stress-free, financial-free options for activities for parents and children to be involved in – reading, writing and accessing public libraries (especially during this time of drought where families are currently going without and struggling to access free family activities).

### **Activities**

1. Invite Phil Kettle, children's author of the 'Too Cool' series to speak with the children from all the primary schools in the local area.
  - a. St Francis Primary School
  - b. Nathalia Primary School
  - c. Waaia/Yalca South Primary School (and we bused these students into Nathalia)
  - d. Local home schooled students
2. Provided three sessions for the Phil to speak with the students, according to year levels.
  - a. Prep/1/2
  - b. 3/4
  - c. 5/6
3. Invited the VET Hospitality students from St Mary of the Angels Regional Secondary College and the Nathalia Secondary to cater for the adult event in the evening (and they were able to use the event as part of their assessment for their course.)

4. Hold a Literary Night at the Franciscan Centre, St Mary of the Angels Regional Secondary College for the adults to indulge in some local entertainment.
  - a. Phil Kettle spoke to everyone about the importance of literacy and the integral role parents play in encouraging their children to love reading.
  - b. Tammy Muir entertained everyone with his bush poetry.
  - c. Brian 'Chops' Stanger taught everyone to draw cartoons and had the room laughing at his characterisations of local entities, including Phil Kettle.
  - d. We had giveaways on the night and the supper was a huge success.

## **Outcomes**

- Given that we only had three weeks to put this together, we were delighted with the overall outcome. Over 250 students were given a wonderful opportunity to engage with Phil Kettle, a well known author for the youngsters – and especially for boys. Most of the students left the hall very excited. What impressed me most about Phil's presentation was that he spoke with each age group using language and topics that were age appropriate and engaging. The adults who attended were very impressed.
- For the adult event, held on the evening of the same day, we catered for 70 people but only had about 40 rsvps. On the night we gave out 69 entry door tickets for the giveaways.
- The other interesting aspect of the evening was that there was a wide mix of people representing many different aspects of the community. We had people with a farming background, members from the elderly community, men and women, couples from both the primary and secondary schools, teachers, members from the Nathalia and District Hospital and people with no connection to the schools or the hospital.
- Most people really enjoyed the evening and came away surprised by how much they enjoyed.
- People commented on the dynamics that were generated by the partnerships made in bringing the night together using groups from across the community. This was especially noted in regards to the working together of both the state and catholic schools.
- Some people commented that the evening session went too long. (This was mainly due to a couple of the entertainers taking longer than planned for their sessions.)

- Some parents at St Francis have commented that their children have taken up reading more avidly with one student who was struggling with even picking up a book, now reading all of the 'Too Cool' series.
- Overall the day was most enjoyable for everyone and generated an excitement and enjoyment for reading.

## **Conclusions**

We would love to see more of these events funded for our local rural communities. Obviously the event would have benefited from having more time to advertise and promote. However, there were timeframes that came into effect that for this occasion the steering committee decided that we would follow through as the opportunity presented itself.

With more planning, there would be more partnering with key community groups such as the Local public Library (which was unavailable due to it physically being built at the time last year) and the Community House.

What was integral to the success of this event was the involvement of varying sectors of the community and inviting them to play lead roles in the different aspects of the day. With each group responsible for organising their role, there was less pressure on the steering committee to do all the work. It also meant that a variety of people were aware of the event regardless of promotion and this was reflected in the turn out at the evening event.