

My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes

13 Aug 2020

A new theatrical and musical performance provided much-needed creative engagement for young Queenslanders

What

My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes is a theatrical and musical performance of Eve Sutton’s book of the same name, targeted at children aged 0-5 years old.

Created by Empire Theatre in partnership with State Library of Queensland’s early literacy program, First 5 Forever, the production was developed in response to an identified gap in creative engagement opportunities for young children in South West Queensland.

My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes describes cats from around the world and the performance work features interactive songs and movement, with Auslan signing also incorporated to increase accessibility.

The project was supported by Empire Theatre Projects (the Regional Arts Services Network provider for South West Queensland), in partnership with Toowoomba and Maranoa regional councils, Balonne Shire Council and Toowoomba Concert Orchestra.

Designed to be toured into small spaces, such as libraries and halls, the work aligns with the First 5 Forever program and was delivered as part of the program in the region’s local libraries.

My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes toured to 18 libraries across the South West for two weeks during the 2019 winter school holidays.

When and where

July 2019

Toowoomba, Maranoa and Balonne regional libraries



*Performance at Surat Library, featuring Justin Tamblyn.
Photo Credit: Surat Library Joanna Weirnert*

Key stats [Nov 2018 to June 2019 phase]



6 employment opportunities for regional artists



18 performances



18 libraries (11 in Toowoomba Region, 4 in Maranoa Region and 3 in Balonne Shire)



800 people attended

Investment

My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes was supported by the Regional Arts Services Network (RASN) South West Queensland service provider, Empire Theatre Projects, in collaboration with Toowoomba and Maranoa regional councils, Balonne Shire Council and Toowoomba Concert Orchestra.

RASN is an initiative of the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland. The Queensland Government has committed \$6.5 million to RASN from 2017-18 to 2020-21 to build arts capacity in regional areas, support collaboration, and leverage the value of the arts to achieve social and economic outcomes.

The Queensland Government invests \$5 million annually in First 5 Forever, which is delivered by the State Library of Queensland in partnership with local governments and links to a network of more than 320 public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres throughout the state.



Performance at the Toowoomba City Library Photo Credit: Salt Studios

Outcomes

- Children, families and library staff were thrilled with the show and are keen to see the performance return, along with similar creative initiatives.
- The project supported professional employment opportunities for six regional artists.
- Artists involved reported the initiative helped develop their skills and increased their professional network and career opportunities.
- Seventy per cent of librarians surveyed said the program attracted new audiences.
- The project encouraged new partnerships and provided new ways to connect with children and families in the Toowoomba region

Feedback from libraries involved

- “ This was a wonderful event that both young and older members of our community came to enjoy. Well done to all involved.
- “ This program was particularly well received in our Maranoa Libraries and we would love to see more of these events visiting our region in future.
- “ Our attendees really enjoyed the performance and asked that we hold similar activities in future.
- “ thought the length of time was just right as I could see some of the children starting to lose concentration in the last minute or so. I think this was fantastic to come to our small rural community especially in the school holidays. Our library is still receiving excellent feedback. Thank you – we all had a great morning.
- “ Thanks to the presenters. It was very well presented, and very well received. Bought back wonderful memories for the adults with the music as well.

Learnings and reflections

Empire Theatre Projects had the following reflection:

- “ This project was rewarding for all partners and will have a life beyond 2019. It was developed in direct response to need and was able to be delivered effectively and efficiently across the region.
- The strategic investment by SWQ Regional Arts built networks, opportunity and product that will assist in cultural development for the community into the future.

Tips for others

- “ Building relationships with existing programs like First 5 Forever that have existing engaged audiences helps to open the door into communities that you have no other previous relationship with. Let the ground work that they have already done and which is imbedded in community help you to build your profile and connections. This project utilised collaboration really effectively and made touring efficient by benefiting from the marketing and network that already existed.



Performer Justin Tamblin at the Oakey Library Photo Credit: Salt Studios

What next

A tour into Lockyer Valley, Somerset and Scenic Rim was being planned for Easter and winter 2020 but is currently on hold due to the impact of COVID-19.

Empire Theatre is interested in developing another product in the future and is always on the lookout for the next book.

Find out more

[South West Regional Arts Service Network](#)
[First 5 Forever](#)