

## Using video to *socialise the science* of family literacy and promote libraries

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### **Abstract:**

*In Queensland (a state of Australia) public libraries are emerging as a key ally in the fight against sliding literacy rates in school children.*

*First 5 Forever, a \$20 million state government funded initiative was established in 2015 to help address a negative literacy trend in school age children by offering families with newborns, toddlers and pre-schoolers vital support and resources. Programming now has the potential to reach 99% of the Queensland population.*

*The initiative is coordinated by the State Library of Queensland, delivered through public libraries and is provided free to families with children aged zero to five years.*

*Why libraries? With branches in every community, libraries were recognised as being uniquely placed to directly reach families – a significant strength as Queensland is nearly five times the size of Japan, seven times the size of Great Britain, and two and a half times the size of Texas.*

*There are more public libraries in Queensland than McDonalds restaurants, so it made sense to harness their strong community presence to reach and impact on families. However, commonsense in the digital age tells us that having extensive physical presence is not everything.*

*This is why a First 5 Forever statewide marketing strategy was developed – to support a strong network of libraries to expand their reach, promote their role and raise awareness around the importance of early literacy.*

*The core reasons why families were targeted to engage with First 5 Forever were founded on evidence from neuroscience, early childhood and various health fields. Building a strong case for why parents and caregivers should participate was a challenge. It couldn't easily be drilled down to a single tagline or campaign slogan so social media and videos were used extensively to effectively engage families.*

*The First 5 Forever team worked with the Queensland network of libraries to deliver compelling content that would resonate to a diverse community of families who live cities, regional towns and small remote islands.*

*Videos designed for release on social media channels were identified early as effective tools for the network to use to engage families on the importance of participating and to draw them into their libraries and outreach activities.*

*Four videos were created, each with their own purpose and all have been extremely successful on social media, collectively achieving nearly half a million views and high engagement among target groups.*

*This presentation will also share the success stories of creating and using local content across social networks to connect with families and stakeholders.*

**Keywords:** Video, Social Media, Marketing, Early Literacy, Libraries

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In Queensland (a state of Australia) public libraries have been given an unprecedented opportunity to play a bigger and more influential role in early literacy. While major news outlets are reporting the country as “facing a national crisis”<sup>ii</sup> on childhood literacy, Queensland libraries have steadily gained momentum to buck this trend through the four-year state government funded family literacy initiative, First 5 Forever.

First 5 Forever began in 2015 to give all families with newborns, toddlers and pre-schoolers free access to resources, activities and support with the bold ambition to influence family literacy behaviour and change perceptions on the critical importance of the home learning environment.

In its formation, it was guided by the mounting and unequivocal evidence that parents and carers have the single most important influence over their child’s lifelong language and literacy outcomes<sup>ii iii iv</sup>.

The initiative is coordinated by the State Library of Queensland but it is delivered through an extensive public library network, which receives 90% of the funding.

In addition to increasing access to early literacy support; facilitating collaboration; and raising workforce capability the initiative's cumulative success hinges on:

- Reaching all families with children aged 0-5;
- Raising awareness of the important role carers of young children play
- Promoting the simple things all grownups, from all backgrounds can do to provide children with a quality home learning environment
- Elevating libraries as hubs for family literacy

And all of this across a geographical area nearly five times the size of Japan, seven times the size of Great Britain, and two and a half times the size of Texas. There are more public libraries in Queensland than McDonalds restaurants, and this strong community presence is a significant strength. However, physical presence is just one part of the marketing mix and a social marketing strategy harnessing the power of video was favoured early on for its bang for buck potential.

A strategy was developed to support a strong network of libraries to expand their reach, promote their role and raise awareness around the importance of early literacy.

The core reasons why families were targeted to engage with First 5 Forever were founded on evidence from neuroscience, early childhood and various health and allied health fields. Building a strong case for why parents and caregivers should participate was our challenge. Our videos and social media messaging needed to inform families on the critical importance of their role while also drawing them into libraries and outreach activities.

Our core messages to underpin a host of sub-messages were:

- The most important time for a child's brain development is the first five years and;
- The single most important influence on healthy brain growth in the early years are parents and primary carers.

As such, our target audience were in order of importance:

- Parents, parents-to-be and primary carers of Queensland children aged 0-5
- Their grandparents, important extended family members and other carers
- Queensland-based staff from a range of disciplines who work with young children (library staff, early childhood education and care staff, health and allied health workers etc.)
- The wider community as influencers and advocates so parents/carers are supported in their roles

Our messages needed to compete with the increasing 'noise' that vie for a consumer's attention in the age of social media. They also needed to resonate with a wide range of families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who live in large metropolitan cities, small regional centres or tiny remote islands.

### **Why a focus on video?**

According to one study<sup>v</sup>, Facebook posts utilising video have 135% higher organic reach than regular photo posts – and with a growing community of First 5 Forever and library followers on Facebook, it was considered a strategic choice.

Video was also considered an effective tool to communicate complex messages in an accessible and appealing format with the best potential to entice interest and behaviour change. This was a particularly important consideration given the diversity of First 5 Forever’s universal audience – some highly educated, some with high socio-economic backgrounds and others with low literacy, low socio-economic or non-English speaking backgrounds.

Adding to this, video was considered an effective tool to use in professional development seminars and workshops, as a quick and captivating introduction to the ethos of the initiative for library staff who work directly with young children. Video has also been used at conferences and presentations to engage and mobilise stakeholders and influencers.

Four core videos were created – each designed to tell and build on the First 5 Forever story. They were released in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 and the most recent three were created with production budgets between \$5,000 and \$10,000 each. These last three were also released with modest promotional budgets (under AU\$400 each).

### **Video 1: *Is it Storytime?*<sup>vi</sup>: 2015**

Developed by a contracted advertising agency, an animation video was created to launch the First 5 Forever initiative. It was created at TVC length (under 30secs) and was developed to launch the First 5 Forever brand and introduce the overarching links between brain development and reading.

In this video a child’s storybook comes to life with its central character – a frog, which is widely used as a First 5 Forever brand mascot – jumping from the page and explaining the importance of shared reading for early brain development.

This video was created in the early stages of the initiative and it was recognised that a stronger link to libraries was needed and future efforts needed to include the promotion of a broader range of early literacy behaviours (e.g. talking, singing and playing).

Nevertheless, the video was used in a statewide marketing campaign to launch the initiative and with a good marketing budget attracted strong views (105,000 on YouTube and 123,000 views on Facebook).

### **Video 2 *Little Moments*<sup>vii</sup>: 2016**

The second video, created in late 2016, was *Little Moments*, a documentary-style short which included candid vox pops from parents and carers of babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers.

The concept behind this video aimed to reveal the critical importance of a parent’s role as their child’s first and most important educator — above and beyond what can be widely considered as more important. It employs personal appeal to incite emotional responses in viewers strong enough to encourage them to act. The aim at concept stage was to tug at heartstrings and reinforce a strong feeling of purpose and gratification about the role of a parent. So much so, viewers feel compelled to find out more and engage with the program. In other words, it’s first and foremost function was to make viewers *feel* something.

A script was developed and a filmmaker was contracted to execute the idea. For the shoot, we filmed parents' responses to what they considered most important in giving their child a great start. Their answers range widely and each parent was then filmed reacting when they learn it's actually them who trump everything.

Their sincere and honest reactions make emotional viewing and the video closes with a call-to-action promoting the Queensland network of libraries as the place to learn more and get support.

When the video was released, there was overwhelmingly positive response from First 5 Forever partners and social media followers.

On owned Facebook channels, the video received 41,000 views, was shared 224 times and received over 200 positive reactions. These figures do not take into account shares and engagement that our partner libraries received on their own channels. It attracted positive comments like:

*This is beautiful...*

*What really matters in the first 5 years? Tag some wonderful parents who should see this. ❤️*



**Creative Mum Life**

*What do you think is the most important thing to help your child get the best start? Watch this great video from First 5 Forever to find out to see if you got the answer right! I think I could keep watching this video on repeat 😊😊*

**The Speech Hub**

*A very important message to parents of young babies and children. Feel the love. ❤️🌱*

**Shady tree books**

The video received likes, comments and shares from local, national and international libraries and allied organisations including health professionals, literacy organisations, parent groups and bloggers, early childhood organisations and care providers.

Our public library partners also responded positively which was key to getting it shared beyond the networks available to us.

*WOW, WOW, and WOW!*

*How moving and powerful is the F5F video??!. Well done to you and all involved, I don't think you could have captured it any better.*

**Marnie Julin, First 5 Forever Coordinator, Logan City Council Libraries**

*Hi First 5 Forever team*

*This video is gold! This really gets the message across about the important role parents play in their child's literacy development. Thank you so much for creating and sharing this. I have to admit, I got a little teary when I watched it.*

*Thank you also for the media release template. These resources will definitely be used and promoted.*

## **Karen Hewett, First 5 Forever Project Officer, Noosa Council Library Service**

The video was also posted to Twitter (1000 +views), YouTube (13,000 views) and Vimeo (2000+ views) and partner libraries were encouraged to embed these on their websites. They were also supplied with template media releases to drum up regional and small media outlet interest.

### **Video 3 *Little Moments Big Impact: 2017*<sup>viii</sup>**

Building on the success of its first two videos, the First 5 Forever team set out to create a third video — one that could expand on the story and provide scientific credibility to the brand. In 2017, a video concept to socialise the science behind the family role in early literacy was developed.

Some excellent networking at a kids cricket match led to a neuroscientist from a prestigious Queensland University to agree to participate and after considerable groundwork, the team secured the necessary talent, locations, and crew.

This video aimed to make the science behind First 5 Forever accessible and appealing and the use of Dr Mike Piper, the starring neuroscientist worked extremely well to give the brand scientific authenticity – without being alienating, clinical or overly challenging to the lay person.

The film is based around the expert opinion of Dr Mike Piper, an Associate Professor of neuroscience at The University of Queensland's School of Biomedical Sciences and Queensland Brain Institute. He is filmed in his lab and lab coat. As the film progresses, he transitions to his role as a doting father and viewers see him interact with three young children in a home and library environment.

Throughout the film, Dr Piper explains in non-scientific terms why the first five years are critical for brain development and the simple things families can do to support healthy brain growth. It concludes with recommendations on what families should do and a call to action to get support from the library.

The video was designed to appeal to all families and the use of a dad was an intentional strategy based on the overwhelmingly positive social media feedback received on content featuring men with young children. For example, a photo of a dad reading to his child posted to the First 5 Forever Facebook page typically receives more than double the engagement of a similar photo featuring a mother reading to her child.

The strategy worked and, like *Little Moments*, the video was instantly well received when released.

On Facebook the video received 92,000 views, was shared 177 times and attracted over 1000 reactions, 380 from shares. According to Facebook analytics, it particularly appealed to women in the 25-35 age group – which is consistent with intended audience expectations.

Some of the positive reactions it received include:

*It's hard to believe just how much brain development happens during the early years! This is why it's so important to read, talk, sing and play with our little ones as often as possible.*

## [Mackay Paint the Town REaD](#)

*Play!!! Read!!! Talk!!!*

*I love this!*

[Brilliant Minds Psychology Clinic - Springwood](#)

*Little moments, BIG impact.*

[South Burnett Under 4s Network](#)

It was also posted to Twitter (1,500 impressions), YouTube (51,000 views) and Vimeo (840+ views) and partner libraries were encouraged to embed these on their websites.

In May 2018, *Little Moments, Big Impact* received international recognition at the 10<sup>th</sup> annual A Corto Di Libri film contest winning best film in the advertising section.

### **Captions for accessibility and increased engagement**

Up to 85% of Facebook users view videos on mute<sup>ix</sup> and according to Facebook, 76% require the sound on for their videos to be understood<sup>x</sup>. It's a behaviour that is believed to be particularly common among First 5 Forever's target audience (so as not to wake sleeping children).

Recognising this trend, while also improving accessibility, closed captions were added to the native Facebook video upload. This allowed First 5 Forever's followers and viral viewers to view the video passively and consume the content with fewer barriers. It is believed this can be attributed in some part to the strong number of views it received. From these learnings, all subsequent First 5 Forever videos uploaded to Facebook included closed captions.

### **Video 4 *Everybody Stop*<sup>xi</sup>: 2018**

Our fourth and most recent video was created in response to a unique opportunity. One of our delivery partners Logan City Council Libraries held a First 5 Forever event and engaged a popular local hip hop/rap music duo to write and perform a song about the importance of the first five years. The song was such a local success, and so true to message, the State Library of Queensland team proposed to take it statewide through video.

With the support and enthusiasm from the musicians and Logan Libraries the video *Everybody Stop* was born. The rationale to produce this one was to rally community behavioural change through the endorsement of popular community leaders.

Again, the video was an instant success.

On Facebook the music video received 70,000 views, was shared 273 times and attracted over 1200 reactions, 525 from shares. What was particularly exciting about the release of this video was the positive response from a much more diverse group of organisations and influencers. As the song was performed by artists with Aboriginal and Pacific Islander heritage, the video was embraced and shared by communities who had not before engaged with First 5 Forever – helping us to gain brand credibility and appeal among new audiences.

Some of the positive reactions it received include:

*“Wonderful, Engaging. The kids all look like they're having fun and the Parents are all doing the actions. Really showing what nurturing our children is all about.”*

**Sandra Young, Facebook user**

*"Everybody stop... take a little time... the first five years are important to your child..."*

*What a great way to spread the message that the little things we do can make a big difference to children's futures!*

*(BTW, we bet you can't resist singing along... )”*

[Play Your Part](#)

A short and long version of the music video was also posted to YouTube where they received 3,000 views collectively.

### **Videos and their importance in professional development activities**

Reaching families effectively relies on strong buy-in from library staff who work as part of First 5 Forever in Queensland public libraries. There are thousands who work in small libraries in remote regions up to large services in metropolitan areas.

The *Little Moments* video is used to open First 5 Forever professional development workshops for these staff to set the scene on why the first five years are important. Facilitators ask workshop participants the question posed in the video and like the parents in the video, the group then brainstorm their answers. Facilitators then pass around a box similar to the one seen on film and finally screen the video. This exercise has been met with overwhelmingly positive feedback as participants are often presented with the importance of the educator, library staff member and health professional in early literacy but not as often the importance of families and the role they need to play in communicating with them.

First 5 Forever strives to make a difference in the home environment and videos have not only been effective in communicating directly with families but also in empowering library staff to understand that it is part of their role influence this.

In response to using video content in First 5 Forever professional development, some libraries have independently created their own prop boxes for use at library check out and First 5 Forever activities.



*Above: A local adaptation of the box featured in the Little Moments video by Torres Strait Island Regional Council staff.*





*Above: Another local adaptation of the box featured in the Little Moments video by Logan City Council library staff.*

The *Little Moments Big Impact* video has also filled a gap for Australian video content to communicate the importance of early brain development to both families and staff in a simple, understandable way. As such, it is now used in professional development to reinforce the brain development theory and relate it to practical ways libraries and the early childhood education sector can support early language and literacy.

The *Everybody Stop* video is also being used in professional development as an uplifting way to show library user response to the initiative and how it is embedded in real communities.

To conclude, a focus on videos has been an extremely fruitful activity for First 5 Forever and a strong component of the marketing strategy. The four videos highlighted in this paper have exceeded performance expectations, particularly on social media, collectively achieving nearly half a million views and high engagement among target groups.

## **About the Authors**

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Rachael is focussed on facilitating the connection between communities and libraries. In February 2017 Rachael joined the First 5 Forever team at State Library of Queensland coordinating this statewide family literacy initiative. First 5 Forever is a statewide family literacy initiative delivered by public libraries with the primary aim of providing strong early literacy foundations for all Queensland children aged 0-5. Prior to this role Rachael worked on the QANZAC Historypin project connecting communities with local history through the commemoration of the centenary of the First World War. With over twenty five years experience in the library sector Rachael has worked in both metropolitan and regional Queensland in a variety of roles across public, education and special library environments. Contact Rachael on [rachael.browning@slq.qld.gov.au](mailto:rachael.browning@slq.qld.gov.au) State Library of Queensland +61 7 3842 9117

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Louise Denoon, Executive Director, Public Libraries and Engagement, State Library of Queensland is responsible for the partnership with 77 Queensland Local Governments delivering services through more than 320 public libraries. Louise has more than 20 years' experience working with cultural institutions. most recently at the State Library of New South Wales and previously as Executive Manager Queensland Memory at SLQ. Louise also worked at the Museum of Brisbane, Brisbane City Council and Global Arts Link, Ipswich City Council. Louise is passionate about working with communities and unleashing the potential of cultural organisations to meet the challenges of the 21st century. With an educational background in Visual Arts and Humanities, Louise is an experienced cultural leader who has been responsible for a number of important exhibitions and initiatives including developing new models of community engagement and participation.

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## **About the Presenter**

**Vicki McDonald** is a key player in the transformation of the library sector in Queensland. As State Librarian and CEO of State Library of Queensland she understands the need for a strong, relevant and innovative library service. Ms McDonald's extensive national and international experience includes executive roles with State Library of NSW and Queensland University of Technology. She is the immediate Past President of the Australian Library and Information Association, and is currently a member of the IFLA Governing Board as Division I Chair. As State Librarian, Ms McDonald is a custodian of Queensland memory and works in partnership with public libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres. Her appointment as State Librarian in 2016 follows a career of advocacy that started among the bookshelves of the Dalby-Wambo public library in regional Queensland.

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