

## **A Dance Party in the Library (or: What Happens When the Kids Are in Charge)**

*Presented by Cristy Burne, Sam Probett, and Brooke Donabie*

### **Research question**

How does the City of Melville Library engage 9–11-year-olds to prevent declining visitor rates in this age group and encourage them to remain readers and library patrons throughout high school?

### **Methodology**

To address this challenge, Creative Learning Producer Sam Probett empowered students to design the solution. Partnering with Western Australian children's author and presenter Cristy Burne, two co-design workshops were delivered with all Year 5 and 6 students at Booragoon Primary School. Students brainstormed their ideal library event, with no idea considered too ambitious. They designed a large-scale Saturday event featuring seven themed zones, including cake decorating, Lego competitions and an inflatable obstacle course. Students also created promotional posters and videos, shared across the school and wider community. To reinforce the event, a City of Melville librarian visited the Year 6 cohort to reinforce services offered at local libraries. Families pre-registered memberships, enabling cards to be distributed onsite alongside information about services.

### **Findings (emerging insights)**

The event attracted 950 community members. Twenty-six per cent of the school's total cohort attended (approximately 120 students plus families). Twenty per cent of the Year 6 cohort registered for membership – the highest uptake in three years. Feedback from students, families and community members was overwhelmingly positive. Further data analysis is underway to determine the impacts on City of Melville library visits amongst this age group.

### **Significance**

When students had agency to “run the library for a day”, it fostered ownership, belonging and renewed relevance. By positioning children as co-creators rather than consumers, the library became a space that reflects their voices and interests – supporting sustained engagement beyond primary school.