

FOCUS NEWSLETTER

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Newsletter 3/2026

Welcome

Hello and welcome to our third and final newsletter for 2026.

In this newsletter we celebrate all things reading and volunteering and hope you find the articles of interest and engaging. Perhaps make yourself a nice cup of tea and sit down and relax while browsing the HU4K newsletter. Take a moment for yourself to celebrate you and your gift of volunteering that makes such a tangible difference to children's literacy in your own town or city.

The journey of making a difference in volunteering brings to mind a quote from the poem *The Road Not Taken* (1916) by Robert Frost: "Two roads diverged in a wood and I – I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference." What may pass you by taking the fastest route? It can be so much more interesting and rewarding to take the slow way and enjoy the journey. It may take some time to see a difference in a child's reading but the ultimate reward is well worth it. Enjoy your Focus Newsletter.

Congratulations



Some dates to note in your diary:

Bunbury & regions
Christmas get together is
on Monday 21st of
December 2026.

Busselton region
Christmas get together is
on Tuesday 15th of
December.

Margaret River/Augusta
region Christmas get
together is to be advised.

A Busselton Volunteer Networking Event was held on 24th of July on the topic of "Fluency in Pairs" presented by teacher Sharna Winwood. Fluency in pairs reading is a collaborative strategy where two students read a text together, thus building reading accuracy, speed and expression.

Two students sit together, side by side and take turns reading the same book. Ideally, the students will be at slightly different levels of reading. One student will read aloud while the other follows the text silently. The students take turns one paragraph at a time and thereby support each other with decoding difficult words. The concept builds reading confidence, deepens empathy and develops comprehension.

People Need People

On the 15th of September our own Jan Akaczonczek won the **Zonta Club of Bunbury Woman of Achievement award as Regional Coordinator for Hands Up 4 Kids**. Jan is the absolute backbone of Hands Up 4 Kids, with dedication and passion for improving children's literacy on a local level. Jan, along with Jan Pedersen is one of the founding members of Hands Up 4 Kids starting back in 2012.

Congratulations to Jan on this much deserved recognition and award from Zonta Club of Bunbury.

Pictured (above) is Jo Blades, president Zonta Club of Bunbury with Jan.

Being social is like the heart and soul of who we are! Picture this: hanging out with friends, chatting with neighbours, and feeling like you are part of a big community. It's like our secret ingredient for happiness and good vibes!

As humans, we're wired for connection and community. When we share, learn and laugh together, we create this amazing sense of "we're all in this together!" Feeling like we belong and knowing we matter – that's what it is all about.



Photo of our Busselton Primary School volunteers with the teacher, Sharna Winwood who made the presentation on "Fluency in Pairs" on the 24th July, 2026.

Volunteers in the photo above L-R, Sharna Winwood teacher, Jan Akaczonczek, Karen Gelm, Kathy Booth, Terry Owens, Pamela Beavington and Judy Davis. Ron Mildenhall, Busselton Zone Coordinator is at the back.

Benefits of Volunteering

It won't come as a surprise to any of our volunteers that there are many benefits to be gained by volunteering. People who gift their time have been reported to be happier and healthier than those who don't.

An article from the University of Sydney shows that:

- Volunteering can improve your physical health. For example, lowering blood pressure and contributing to positive mental health.

- Being a volunteer around other volunteers can give a "lift" to all those around you with positivity being contagious.

- Volunteering increases a person's sense of satisfaction with life. The good a volunteer does for others comes back in spades.

Ref: Sydney.edu.au/news-opinions



HU4K Focus Newsletter invited Di Martin to participate in our *Spotlight On* questions for our newsletter. Many thanks to Di for her fabulous responses & for joining in the fun:

How long have you been a HU4K volunteer? Since September 2012 after hearing Jan A. talking to Ron Tait on ABC radio, saying that employers were finding many school leavers struggling to complete job applications. I was newly retired and needing something meaningful to do and this was it, especially as while working at Legal Aid my help had regularly been needed because lack of literacy was an issue for many applicants unable to fill in their form for funding. This perhaps contributed to their unlawful behaviour.

What do you like most about being a volunteer? Volunteering with Hands Up 4 Kids allows me to share my love of reading with children, encouraging them to think it's like a movie for the mind. I have worked with the same teacher at Cooina since 2014 with Years 2 to 6 over that time, and even though most of the children are quite fluent readers their comprehension can be lacking. It's fun helping to broaden their knowledge with the one-on-one opportunity that HU4K provides.

Where did you grow up? Hilton Park then Melville Heights, both suburbs of Fremantle.

What was your favourite childhood book? Anything by Enid Blyton but I most loved the Billabong series by Mary Grant Bruce.

What is your favourite comfort food? I'm a sucker for cake.

What are you reading right now? The Robert Galbraith (really J K Rowlings) private detective series of very fat books with some very gruesome murders but wonderful characterisations.

If you were stranded on a desert island, what would you take with you? Would have to be a fully loaded Kindle as long as it could be charged, otherwise a pencil and puzzle book.

Any tips or advice for new HU4K volunteers? Enjoy the little darlings and relationship with your teacher.



School of the Air

Outback kids undoubtedly enjoy a wonderful lifestyle for connection with nature and the outdoors world but they, along with their parents experience the harshest of droughts and extreme weather patterns. Prior to the 1950's era of School of the Air children relied on correspondence lessons arriving in the mail and parents finding the time to guide their children through their lessons. There was no peer interaction.

It wasn't until the invention of the pedal radio by Alfred Traeger in 1929 that helped the Royal Flying Doctor bring services to the outback. A Miss Adelaide Miethke saw the possibilities of schooling for outback children. It was a long road from then to getting equipment to families, permissions sought and processes in place that in 1950 the first trial began.

The trial was so successful that the world's first School of the Air was officially opened on 8th of June 1951. Of course, since then we have moved into the digital era with the first use of the internet being in 2000. By 2006 the School of the Air was totally reliant on satellite technology. Now in it's 75th year it is truly amazing how much of a difference it has made to the schooling of outback kids.

Ref: <https://www.schooloftheair.net.au/our-story/history>

The Graphic Link

A recent article in The Conversation highlighted the value of graphic novels. Some view graphic novels (like comics) as not "real reading". However, the article explained the value of graphic novels for children today who are used to the visual culture of videos and moving images as an important bridge between these active devices and reading books.

The combination of text, speech bubbles and drawings build reader encouragement and engagement giving the readers opportunity to decode the text and develop comprehension. Like the Batman TV shows of the 1960s with the BAMs and POWs, graphic novels open a gateway for students from the digital world to the written world.

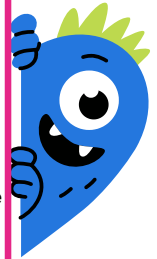
Ref: <https://theconversation.com/does-your-child-only-read-graphic-novels-thats-ok-its-helping-them-build-literacy-skills>

Here's to the ones who read to us:

The ones who kept a library card in the wallet, worn at the corners.
 The ones who used train tickets as bookmarks. Receipts. The corner of a coffee napkin. Anything that was nearby.
 The ones who read the same picture book twenty times and never let on they were tired.
 The ones who treated the library and the local bookshop like a treasure hunt.
 The ones who let us choose, even when the choice was *The Gruffalo* for the 100th time.
 The ones who said one more chapter, then bed and meant it kindly.
 The ones who never told us reading was good for us, because they knew we'd come to it ourselves.
 And now they are reading to grandchildren – passing it on, three generations deep.
 Here's to all of them and to all of you for continuing the tradition.

Where the Wild Things Are – 63 years young

Maurice Sendak published *Where the Wild Things Are* on the 9th of April, 1963. It is the story of Max, a little boy who retreats into his imagination when he is sent to bed without supper for being a "wild thing". In this imaginative adventure story Max becomes king of all the wild things. Maurice Sendak didn't have any formal education in art, but obviously had that raw natural ability. It is one of the most widely known children's books of modern times.



Joke: A snowman was seen in a local grocery store rummaging around in the carrots. He was picking his nose!



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Reading reduces stress faster than a cup of tea!

New Picture Book that will have children in giggles

Book Review: A Hat for Every Harriet by Jess Horn, illustrated by Zoë Bennett

Harriet wears many hats. She has a hat for listening, for following the rules and even for being silly. Harriet wears a different hat for every job, because every job needs a different Harriet. But one day, Harriet has too many hats to wear. Can she find a way to just be herself? A beautifully illustrated picture book with an empowering tale about finding the courage to be yourself.

Jess Horn is a Sydney-based, neurodivergent children's author and former speech pathologist. *A Hat for every Harriet* is available at all good bookstores. Permission to publish review granted by Simon & Schuster.



Rock this recipe

Do you recall the humble but staple CWA recipe for Rock Buns? My Granny used to make them regularly. First appearing in Australian newspapers from the early 1900's (originally from Great Britain in the 19th century), the recipe was quickly adopted into the early editions of the iconic C.W.A. Cookbook editions from approximately the 1930's. They are rugged in appearance but with a deliciously half cake/half biscuit like texture with pops of sweet sultana's mixed throughout. I like to add a half teaspoon of cinnamon in mine. Here is the recipe straight from my copy of the C.W.A Cookery Book and Household Hints, 38th edition (1986). Irresistible eaten still warm from the oven.

2 ½ cups of self-raising flour
 155gr (5oz) butter
 2 eggs
 ¾ cup of sugar

1 small cup of sultanas
 salt
 milk



Mix all together with enough milk to make the mixture the consistency of scones. Drop in spoonfuls on a buttered sheet, and bake in a fairly quick oven for 5 – 7 minutes. Happy baking and best wishes from Focus for 2026.