Education outreach program supported by a collaborative partnership - Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation and The Caledonia Foundation
FAR Out! Treasures to the bush was developed by Learning Service to address equity of access for students and teachers in regional NSW. While city based students and teachers have the opportunity to interact with cultural organisations and their collections this is not always the case for those in remote communities. The State Library is committed to addressing this inequality by providing an education outreach program.

Piloted in 2012 with the support of The Caledonia Foundation the program was further developed in 2014 with the support of the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation. The Far Out! program has been presented at schools across the state including: Bourke; Broken Hill; Cobar; Wee Waa; Cootamundra; Glen Innes; Molong; Albury; Eugowra; Lightening Ridge; Walgett; Ashford; Tumbarumba; Deniliquin; Merimbula; Hay and Wentworth, to name a few.

The FAR Out! program is designed to meet the learning needs of students in Years 3 and 4 and is based on the NSW syllabus for the Australian Curriculum – History. State Library educators, all qualified teachers, share iconic original materials from the Library’s vast collections in an interactive workshop engaging students in the story of Indigenous heritage and British colonisation—a core area of study for every Australian student.

The collection items chosen to tour include: Captain James Cook’s shoe buckles c. 1760–1779; a letter from convict turned enterprising business woman, Mary Reibey c1821; a drawing by Indigenous man Tommy McRae c1864 and an Aboriginal word list from the region where the workshops take place.

Universal themes of resilience and rising above the odds to achieve greatness are explored as educators enthral students with the extraordinary stories of Mary Reibey, James Cook and Tommy McRae. Students become involved in the story or event as they assume the persona of the main character, including dressing in period costume. In this way, young people can imagine a world very different to their own and gain an understanding of the length of time that Indigenous Australians have lived on the land before British Colonisation. Additionally, they become more aware of the challenges faced by early Australian explorers, colonists and convicts.

This education outreach program has visited over 300 schools and 19,600 students and teachers have participated in workshops.
The social impact of the program on school communities has been immense with teachers acknowledging how difficult it is for their students to visit Sydney or in fact a regional Museum or Library. Teachers consistently ask the Library to bring the program back to their school and strong connections to the Library, and the collections, have been established. Often described by students as an 'an unforgettable experience', some have visited the Library with their family, when visiting Sydney.

The Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation and the Caledonia Foundation have long been enthusiastic supporters of regional education programs and Far Out! Treasures to the bush was a perfect fit. The program would not have been possible without their generous support.


Links