



2014-2015
SUMMARY REPORT
Sydney Story FACTORY

Executive Director's Report



It's a bit over three years since the Sydney Story Factory opened its doors in Redfern, and the first kids came barrelling in.

Since then, it's been my privilege to watch these young people grow and change. As they come back, term after term, they've got older and taller, of course. But they've also blossomed into fantastic writers, with wider horizons than when they came in. They're bursting with creative ideas, noticeably more confident and outspoken, and are perfectly comfortable chatting with adults.

This is exactly what my co-founder Tim Dick and I hoped for when we set up the Sydney Story Factory.

The thing Tim and I didn't see as clearly straight away – but which is perhaps the most important thing we've achieved this past year – is that we have become part of our students' community. Our strategic aim for 2014/15 was to maximise our impact in Redfern, and crucial to this was embedding ourselves in the local community. Through major projects like Home, through ongoing collaborations with a wide range of local organisations and schools, and through establishing our Redfern Kids Community Group, we have got to know the people around us, and they have got to know us. We can confidently say we now have a very solid, secure base from which to expand over the coming years.

Community is everything at the Sydney Story Factory. I must thank the passion and dedication of our outstanding staff but we couldn't do what we do without our amazingly dedicated corps of over 400 active volunteers. Their enthusiasm and generosity is matched only by that of our wonderfully generous donors and supporters.

Thank you for being part of our community, and joining us to light the spark of creativity for thousands of young people. Together, we're changing lives.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cath Keenan'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Cath Keenan
Co-founder and executive director



Our Mission and Purpose



Our Mission

At the Sydney Story Factory we're on a mission to change the lives of young people, especially those from marginalised backgrounds, through creative writing and storytelling.

Our Purpose

Every day, we set out to:

- Run innovative and fun creative writing programs, with expert teaching and one-on-one tutoring.
- Encourage young people to communicate ideas, giving them more confidence in their skills, themselves and each other.
- Create and sustain a vital contribution to the community, by respecting and giving voice to the stories around us.

All we do at the Sydney Story Factory is about doing right by the marginalised young people who most stand to benefit from participation in our workshops. Our 2015-17 strategy sets down exactly how we will build on the strong growth we have already experienced since opening our doors in 2012 so that we can increase the number of young people we reach and the quality and impact of

2014-15 BY THE NUMBERS

2,168 Student enrolments

23% Indigenous young people, a 5% increase on last year

47% Young people from language backgrounds other than English, a 3% increase on last year

7,968 Workshop hours

3.67 Average hours of personal tuition per student



every hour they spend with us. We are committed to substantial expansion but as we roll out the first phase of our strategic plan our priority is ensuring our Redfern base is sustainable and successful.

We're comfortably delivering on our 2015 strategic objectives, which are to:

- secure our financial position;
- ensure our programs are having maximum impact;
- increase numbers of young people who are Indigenous and from language backgrounds other than English;
- continue to embed the Sydney Story Factory in the local and education communities.

We make writing fun and rewarding
and help young people find their voice.

A Wonderful World of Workshops



Imaginations don't run to a timetable and creativity doesn't come in a bottle that can be uncorked at will, but something magical happens when young people walk through the doors of the Martian Embassy and into the Sydney Story Factory.

Over the last year we have delivered 119 workshop programs scheduled to fit snugly around young Earthlings' school and life commitments. The creativity they've unleashed has amazed us. But not, perhaps, half as much as it's amazed and excited them.

All Sydney Story Factory workshops are designed by creative writing and literacy experts to:

- * improve written and oral communication skills;**
- * enhance self-confidence and self-efficacy;**
- * nurture creativity and empathy; and**
- * deepen engagement with learning.**

Under the guidance of our expert storytelling team, trained volunteer writing tutors work with students one-on-one or in small groups to write stories of all kinds, giving them the sustained, personal attention to their writing teachers struggle to provide. In every workshop young writers set down an original piece of creative writing, which might be a story, a poem, a zine, a radio script, a non-fiction narrative or an animation that springs straight from their own imagination. We honour and celebrate their writing by publishing it in as many ways as possible and send them back to school with the tools and confidence essential for success.

UBS School Workshop Program

This year we ran 50 workshops during school hours for class groups. All were from schools in lower socio-economic areas, or with high proportions of students who are Indigenous or from language backgrounds other than English. Workshops were either one-offs for two hours of hectic writing fun, or term-long programs where students developed a more complex piece of writing. School groups visited the Martian Embassy from nearby Redfern and Alexandria and from as far as Villawood and Cabramatta, or we went to them.



UBS SCHOOL WORKSHOP PROGRAM

796 Young people had a school-hours creative writing experience like none they've had before

26 Groups of primary school students from 12 schools

24 Groups of high school students from 8 schools

12 Term-long workshops

38 One-off workshops

Book Making with Marcia the Martian

By far the most popular of our one-off workshop formats, run at The Martian Embassy for children in grades three to five, happens to involve writing stories about a Martian visiting Earth. It's complete with a terrifying visit from Marcia the Martian Librarian, who pooh-poohs the idea that Earthling children can write stories. The group has to work together to get the story started then each young writer is set free to bring it home and prove Marcia wrong. Everyone leaves with a bound, illustrated copy of their story, delivered, from behind the cloak of mystery, by the hairy hand of Marcia herself.

Dramatic Monologues with Belvoir Street Theatre

In early 2015 we piloted a new workshop format with a group of ten teenagers, grades seven and eight, from Wiley Park Girls High, from diverse cultural and language backgrounds. In eight two-hour workshops the girls developed an extensive fictionalised narrative based on a real incident or experience in their own lives. By the end of the term each young writer had scripted a dramatic monologue ready for presentation under lights, on stage in the professional theatrical setting of Belvoir Street Downstairs Theatre. Ten very polished and powerful stories were scripted. The final performance was extremely moving for students, volunteers, teachers and the Sydney Story Factory storytelling team alike.

16
terrorising
visits *from*
Marcia the
MARTIAN
LIBRARIAN

768 bananas, apples,
pears, mandarins
128 loaves of
raisin bread fuelling
plus **CREATIVITY**
240 giant
MARSHMALLOWS
devoured at
graduation parties



200 reams of paper
16 ink toner cartridges
used in the
creation
of **STUDENT**
PUBLICATIONS

AFTER SCHOOL WORKSHOPS

16 Term-long after school workshops

255 Enrolled participants

68 Young writers enrolled in more than one workshop

20% Indigenous young people

27% Young people from language backgrounds other than English

After School Workshops

For an hour between 3.30pm and 5pm on any Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday during the school term the walls of the Martian Embassy veritably ring with the noise of keen young writers firing ideas left and right and volunteer writing tutors cheering them on.

This year we ran 16 term-long afterschool workshop programs. Most were for children and young people aged seven to 14, with one, in response to demand, for high school students aged 13 plus. Workshops included elements of drawing, film, audio recording, cartooning, costume or theatre, whatever worked best to spark our young writers' imaginations. Over the last year after-school workshops have included The Big Weird Story Challenge, Diabolical Dialogue, Ride the Wild Mouse, Real Ghosts of Redfern, This Poetry Thing is a Breeze and High School Alert.

Pen Pal Program

To reach out to those young people who can't come to Redfern, or simply can't get enough of the personalised writing tuition we offer, we launched a Pen Pal Program in March 2015. This program also works for the many volunteers who are eager to offer their time and skills but struggle to do so around other commitments. Through our Pen Pal Program, 21 specially trained volunteer writing tutors offered 31 young writers feedback and encouragement on their short stories via email.

We asked young writers in our "Adventure in a Box" workshop why they liked it. They said:

"I could express myself and learn more about writing stories."

"It was fun and helpful with grammar & punctuation."

"I don't have to sit in my room and read books I already read."

"OMG I love it and it was crazy and my partner [tutor] is cool."

We asked young writers in our "Marginalia" workshop why they liked it. They said:

"It had helped me with my creative writing."

"I could learn from others. I made new friends.
I found this experience very egziliring."

"I loved how you put the stories in a book."

"I liked how there were many activities that helped us with the writing."

"We got giant marshmallows."



Sundays at the Story Factory

This was the year that Sundays really sprang to life at the Sydney Story Factory. In the second half of 2014 we offered drop-in workshops - The Sunday Free Writers' Guild - every Sunday morning in parallel with the school term. This was for up to 20 young writers, ages eight to 14. As we moved into 2015 our Sunday workshops underwent a transformation. Because so many participants were coming back every week, because they loved being able to develop a longer piece of work, and because of the number of people on waiting lists wanting to get in, we switched from drop-in workshops to enrolled term-long workshops both morning and afternoon. Many young writers immediately committed to the new programs. By doubling the number of workshops we doubled the number of eager young writers who could attend.

SUNDAY WORKSHOPS

21 Sunday morning drop-in workshops

472 Participants

24 Eager young writers attended 12 or more Sunday drop-ins

4 Term-long Sunday workshops

80 Enrolled participants

28 Eager young writers enrolled in back-to-back term long workshops

76% Young people from language backgrounds other than English

"Daniel... struggles with writing, and getting him to even attempt it is a constant battle. He was so anxious about going yesterday and we almost had to drag him along...BUT ...he had a FANTASTIC day. He loved every minute and was so happy and proud of himself last night."

Parent, Liana Mawston



We asked young writers in our “One Story, Many Endings” workshop why they liked it. They said:

“Amazing opportunity to use our imagination and creativity.”

“Creating my own adventure story is pretty awesome.”

“It makes me feel like a writer. It was amazing.”

“It helps me get over my fear of stage fright and it helps me achieve my writing... I’m going to keep writing stories.”

“I had fun and I want to do it again.”

HOLIDAY WORKSHOPS

25 School holiday workshops

5 Community partner organisations

387 Enrolled participants

138 Keen young writers enrolled more than once

10% Indigenous young people

28% Young people from language backgrounds other than English

School Holiday Workshops

We ran 25 two-hour holiday workshops for budding writers. Six of these we delivered in collaboration with partner organisations - the Girls and Boys Brigade, Settlement Services International, the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence, Compass (Sydney University) and at the Surry Hills Library. Each of these workshops had its own wild and vibrant theme, from the Book of Beards workshop in which young writers created elaborately hirsute characters and sent them off on hair-raising adventures, to the Martian Catalogue workshop in which copy was crafted for intergalactic must-haves that would make even Marcia reach straight for her slime-crustured purse.

Now See Hear

Run throughout 2014, Now See Hear (originally called Radio with Pictures) saw 90 primary and high-school students work together to produce animations using still pictures, sound effects and their own voiceovers. The project culminated in October 2014 after 22 illustrators, two sound recordists and the kind folks at Austereo, who opened their studio, took the kids’ creations and turned them into polished pieces of professional standard - with a distinctly kid-flavoured twist. The finished animations were screened publicly at Giant Dwarf Theatre in Redfern at a grand finale showcase. The kids, and their parents, beamed with pride as their work hit the big screen.

Support Needs Program Pilot

In October 2014 a bright girl named Bella proved the power of creative writing ten times over. Bella, then seven, has autism and does not speak. She writes by pointing to letters on a letter board and spelling each word out. Volunteer manager Craig New began weekly creative writing tutorials with Bella on quiet days at the Martian Embassy (Bella doesn’t like noise). Never before had she been given the freedom and encouragement to explore her creativity and write fiction. Painstakingly and determinedly Bella spelled out her stories and as she did she blossomed. Through one term-long program, and then another, and then another, Bella’s writing skills, self-confidence and, above all, her drive to write have improved out of sight. As a pilot program this has outstripped all expectations and will form the basis of new programs for students with support needs to be developed in the year ahead.

Community & Collaboration

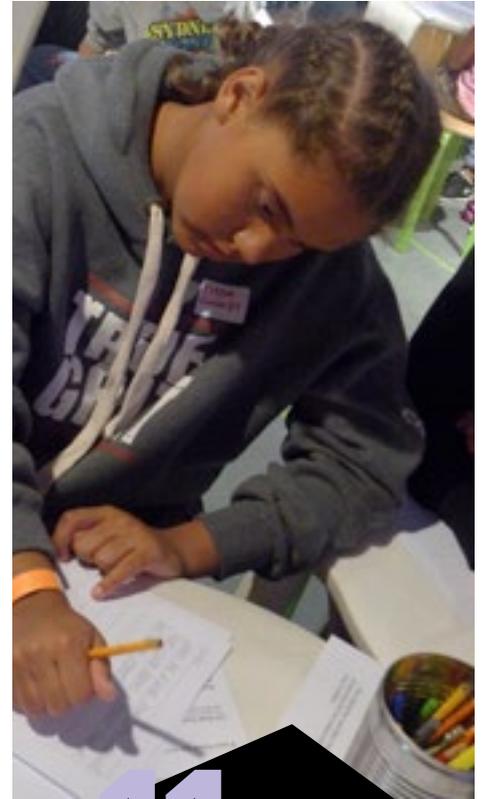
From the start community has been essential to the Sydney Story Factory's success, and over the past year it has been our strategic focus. We have proactively and deliberately cultivated relationships with community and Aboriginal organisations who, like us, are committed to giving local young people the encouragement and support they need to thrive. We know, as they do, that by working together we can have a greater impact than with each of us working in isolation.

In the last year we have partnered with nine community organisations to deliver creative writing workshop programs for young people they support:

- * National Centre of Indigenous Excellence (NCIE)
- * National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy (NASCA)
- * Yurungai Barnados Learning Centre
- * Redfern Jarjum College
- * Settlement Services International
- * Glebe Pathways
- * The Pyjama Foundation
- * Redfern Community Centre
- * The Girls & Boys Brigade

We also established the Redfern Kids Community Group, a network of local community groups working with young people which meets regularly to share ideas and pool resources. By bringing together organisations who are often working with the same young people in different contexts, we can be much more effective at engaging them and supporting them towards a bright future.

Collaborations with community organisations have increased the number of Indigenous young people attending our workshops both during school hours and after school. In our after-school workshops with Yurungai Barnardos Learning Centre and National Centre of Indigenous Excellence, for example, 25 - 55% of the participants were Indigenous.



11 stalls hosted at COMMUNITY EVENTS and activity days

"I am certain that this program provides a wonderful boost to the writing skills of the children. Importantly it is the desire to write that I feel is most positively and permanently affected."

Megan Guenther, The Pyjama Foundation

"NASCA students have been coming to Sydney Story Factory workshops for over two years. They have found them engaging and fun, and we have seen the benefits of this for them in terms of their improved self-confidence, writing skills and enthusiasm for writing."

Blake Borgia, National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy

Proving Our Impact

The Sydney Story Factory has been committed since its inception to conducting a rigorous, long-term evaluation of the benefits of our programs for young people.

This formal evaluation commenced in early 2014 and is being undertaken by Associate Professor Jackie Manuel and Honorary Associate Professor David Smith at the Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney, under the direction of Professor Robyn Ewing, AM. Over time this evaluation, using a qualitative case-study model, is investigating the impact of our creative writing workshops in four main areas:

- writing skills;
- self-confidence;
- motivation to write;
- perceived impact on school work.

The study breaks new ground in the evaluation of complex social and emotional outcomes from arts programs. It tracks changes in students' creativity, and develops a model of creativity based on five central dimensions:

- * **Imagination**
- * **Collaboration**
- * **Persistence**
- * **Inquisitiveness**
- * **Discipline**

Preliminary results from the evaluation were published in February 2015. A rich and complex picture emerged of the many educational, social and emotional benefits of attending Sydney Story Factory programs. These results suggested that some students involved in two or more workshops demonstrate significant development in their creative writing and literacy skills, coupled with a growing awareness of aspects of the creative process, including an understanding of the benefits of working collaboratively. In all seven case studies there was evidence of the positive impact of Sydney Story Factory programs. This included:

- Increased capacity to generate and express ideas (imagination, inquisitiveness);
- The development of 'transferrable' skills (including metacognitive) strategies for generating ideas, writing and sustaining engagement with the process of production (imagination, discipline, persistence);
- Increased capacity to engage with writing over a sustained period of time (discipline, persistence); and
- Self-reported increase in confidence, motivation to write, pride in their writing and enthusiasm (inquisitiveness).

The evaluation is on-going and due to conclude in late 2016.

"Kai started Sydney Story Factory on its very first term, and he never looked back. He has become much more comfortable with writing since taking the workshops, and I'm so appreciative of SSF for giving him the opportunities to grow and gain confidence with his writing."

Parent, Kyong Choe

"Thanks to the SSF for providing this opportunity for [our students] and everything else that you guys do! This is probably our top excursion school-wide throughout the year, the kids just come back buzzing and enthused."

Teacher, Jason Bourke, Bourke Street Primary School

Our Volunteer Community

In just three short years the Sydney Story Factory has gathered a community of volunteers more committed than those of many non-profits twice our size. And where would we be without them?

Volunteers are essential to our innovative workshop model. As writing tutors they provide the sustained personal attention for each individual young writer that supports them through the tricky and challenging stages that inevitably rear their heads in the writing process. Gently and encouragingly they help guide the student, or point out the ideas that could be explored and developed, keeping a young writer who might otherwise be inclined to abandon the project on task and writing.

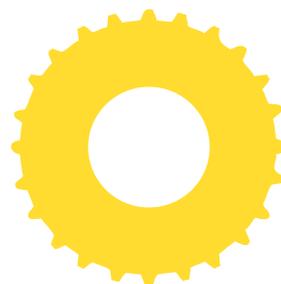
Our volunteers come from all walks of life, and from all over Sydney. They are students and retirees, old and young, men and women, of all classes and creed. They are (or aspire to be, or have been) teachers, journalists, freelance creatives, filmmakers, novelists, project managers, parents and any number of other things. They share a love of writing and a desire to give back to the community.

Of course, managing and motivating a diverse group like this takes some doing. This year considerable energy has gone into streamlining our record-keeping and scheduling processes and improving the flow of communications between us and our volunteers. This has included:

- introducing a weekly email newsletter;
- introducing a (constantly active) closed-group Facebook page;
- running monthly professional development workshops and social events for volunteers, including author talks;
- completely overhauling and improving our volunteer manual;
- ensuring all volunteers provide a current NSW Working With Children Check verification a year ahead of this being a legal requirement.

The benefits have been immediate. Of the 1,207 volunteers we have trained in total, 432 remain active (i.e. have provided all necessary checks and signatures and are workshop-ready).

In October 2014, and again in February 2015, 30 volunteers, all writing tutors with established experience, undertook training to become workshop leaders. Under the supervision of the Sydney Story Factory's expert storytelling team, they subsequently went on to devise and/or lead 29 workshops (mostly holiday and school group workshops) for 650 students. Up-skilling a group of dedicated volunteers in this way had the direct impact of increasing the number and range of workshops we could run, significantly expanding our capacity.





BY THE NUMBERS

432 Active volunteers

296 New volunteers trained

74 Ambassadors of Ink

30 Volunteers trained as workshop leaders

8 **FACTORY TALKS** hosted with authors at the Martian Embassy

236 **CHOCOLATE** blocks consumed by Volunteer Manager Craig (all on his own!)

A huge shout out to our most committed volunteers, those who have completed more than 42 volunteer hours - our Ambassadors of Ink. Thank you!



"I feel lucky to have found the Sydney Story Factory. [Tutoring] is a wonderful opportunity to work alongside kids who are at an explorative and expressive stage in their lives, making sense of the world through stories."

Kat Ferguson, Volunteer Writing Tutor

"Thank you for running such wonderful workshops. I never thought my son would love poetry so much. The energy of the team is very positive and I can see it in my son's enthusiasm every week."

Parent, Hanan Nuseibeh

Our Board

Michael Gonski President



Partner, Herbert Smith Freehills
Michael is a solicitor specialising in employment law. In 2014 he was awarded Philanthropy Australia's Inaugural Emerging Philanthropy Leader Award and is now a member of the board of Philanthropy Australia.

Dr Catherine Keenan Co-founder, Executive Director



Cath was formerly a journalist with The Sydney Morning Herald, working as an arts writer and as literary editor.

Teya Dusseldorp

Executive Director,
Dusseldorp Forum



Teya is executive director of the foundation established by her grandfather which has worked to improve the life opportunities of young Australians for 25 years.

Professor Robyn Ewing AM Vice President



Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney

Robyn is Professor of Teacher Education and the Arts. She is a recognised expert in arts and education.

Larissa Behrendt



Professor of Law and Director of Research, Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning UTS.

Larissa is a lawyer, academic, novelist and filmmaker. She was 2011 NSW Australian of the Year and 2009 NAIDOC Indigenous Person of the Year.

Angus Stuart

Director,
Wolseley Private Equity



Angus has extensive board experience as chairman or director of the businesses owned by Wolseley.

Mark Forrest Treasurer



Chartered Accountant
Mark has over 20 years' experience in commercial environments, including as finance director of Fitness First Australia.

Gail Hambly



General Counsel/
Company Secretary,
Fairfax Media

Gail is responsible for the provision of legal, company secretarial, corporate governance and internal audit services across the Fairfax group.

Jonathan Barouch

Internet Entrepreneur



Jonathan is CEO and founder of Sydney-based technology startup up Local Measure.

Tim Dick Secretary, Co-founder



Solicitor
Tim is a criminal lawyer with Legal Aid. He was formerly a journalist with The Sydney Morning Herald.

Markus Zusak



Author
Markus Zusak is the author of five books, including the international bestseller *The Book Thief*.

Annie Baxter

Head of Communications
and Public Affairs, Google



Annie oversees media relations, community relations, and non-profit outreach for Google in Australia/New Zealand.

Our Staff



Craig New

Volunteer Manager & Mission Control

Craig manages all volunteers, workshop scheduling and every aspect of keeping the Martian Embassy ship-shape and fully operational at all times. He also runs workshops.

Helen Coolican

Deputy Storyteller

Helen has over 20 years' experience as a teacher, and is passionate about putting creativity back at the heart of education. She drove the Home Project to success in 2014.

Matt Roden

Deputy Storyteller

Matt helped set up The Ministry of Stories in London, and is completing a degree in education. He stamps his mark on the Sydney Story Factory both as a workshop leader and as our inhouse designer.

Cath Keenan

Executive Director

Cath oversees all aspects of everything, is never far from her email and is the best robot dance master, bar none.

Richard Short

Storyteller-in-Chief

Richard taught English at Cabramatta High School for five years, before joining the Sydney Story Factory. He oversees the development and delivery of all programs.

Jayne Wasmuth

Development Manager

Jayne joined our staff in April 2015. She is responsible for donor relations and fundraising.



Student Writing

Poopy, the One-eyed Dinosaur

by Kaden

It was Awesome Tuesday in Wonkyville. Poopy the dinosaur woke up and went to the toilet to do his business. Then he realised it was Awesome Tuesday, so something awesome was going to happen that day.

Poopy was a good dinosaur. He had one hundred heads, one eye and was lovely.

After he went to the toilet, Poopy went to every house eating lots of breakfasts. He liked eating meat on toast.

The people were scared of the dinosaur because he was eating meat on his toast. They thought he would eat them. But Poopy just went back home and put on his spotted bow tie, then went to Silly Wet and Wild to have a swim.

At Silly Wet and Wild, Poopy fell in love with another dinosaur named Julia. She had a bow tie on her head and a curved tail. She had one eye and one hundred heads. She also had a fat body.

Poopy's eye almost popped out because of how much he loved Julia.

But Julia did not like Poopy because he had smelly armpits and a hairy bottom.

Poopy said, 'I love you.'

Julia said, 'Go and have a bath!'

Poopy felt sad and angry at the same time, but he had a bath and shaved his hairy bottom, then he went back.

Julia finally said, 'I love you.'

They kissed at the water slide.

Poopy and Julia swam together at the wave pool. A big wave crashed into Julia and she crashed into the bottom of the pool.

Poopy dove into the water to save her life. He picked Julia up with his tail and swam up to the surface.

Julia's eyes were closed, so Poopy breathed air into her until they opened. He walked with her to his house. Then he said, 'Will you marry me?'

Julia said, 'Yes,' and the next day they married.

THE END!

Kaden is seven years old.

Untitled

by Zac Y.

Inside the sunny daisy the golden sun
Inside the golden sun the green hills
Inside the green hills the spiky cactus
Inside the spiky cactus the succulent groves
Inside the succulent groves the smooth caterpillars
Inside the smooth caterpillars the infinite gullies
Inside the infinite gullies the green ladybirds
Inside the green ladybirds the red wallets
Inside the red wallets the lush palms
Inside the lush palms the blue stems
Inside the blue stems the white steam
Inside the white steam the dreamy fields
Inside the dreamy fields the sunny daisy

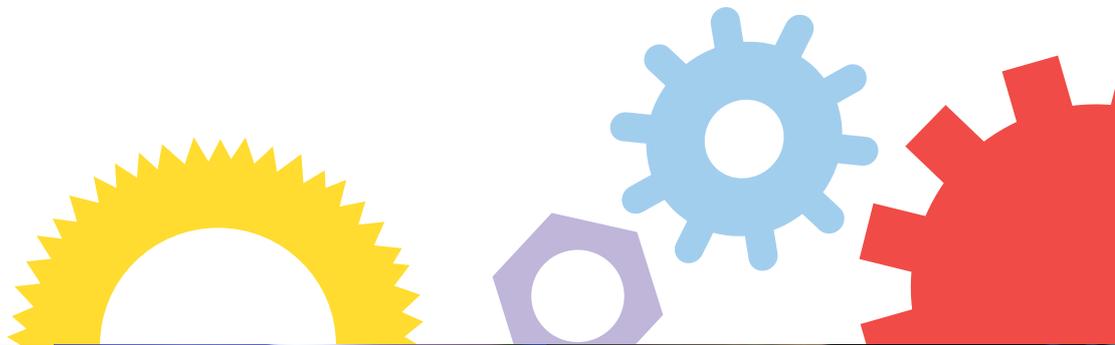
Zac is nine years old.

Thomas, Thomas Morgenstein

by Charlie G.

Thomas, Thomas Morgenstein
Favourite scientist, Albert Einstein.
Thomas, Thomas Morgenstein
Favourite shop the five and dime.
Thomas, Thomas Morgenstein
Goes out every day to dine.
Thomas, Thomas Morgenstein
Eats spaghetti all the time.
Thomas, Thomas Morgenstein
Likes to see the bright sunshine.
Thomas, Thomas Morgenstein
Cannot stand in a straight line.
Thomas, Thomas Morgenstein
Broke the law and got a fine.
Thomas, Thomas Morgenstein
No one likes poems that rhyme with
Thomas, Thomas Morgenstein.

Charlie is ten years old.



Sydney Story FACTORY

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The Sydney Story Factory is an incorporated entity with DGR1 status.
All donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible. Thank you for your support.

