



LET'S READ Newsletter

June 2009



Welcome to this bumper edition of the *Let's Read* Newsletter, our second for 2009. This edition highlights the Let's Read launch in Hackham West SA, inspiring reading session stories from Queensland, and community news updates from New South Wales, Northern Territory, Victoria and Western Australia.

Welcome to World of Books Emelia !



On April 16th 2009, our Queensland Community Facilitator, Elizabeth Sayers, gave birth to her first baby- Emelia Eleanor Elizabeth Harding.

Here Emelia shows us (at just 2 weeks of age), that it is never too early to start enjoying books, as she shares Mem Fox's new title *Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes* with her Mum. Note the way she is showing us her own ten little fingers!

Our congratulations go to Elizabeth and Andrew- and our thanks to Maree Stratton and Col Sutcliffe for filling Elizabeth's position in Brisbane while she takes maternity leave.

Let's Read Community Annual Reports

After a successful 2008 it is time to tell us all about it! Part of delivering *Let's Read* requires communities to prepare an Annual Report outlining how they are progressing with the delivery of *Let's Read*. We have prepared an Annual Report template to simplify this process. The template was e-mailed to communities at the end of March. The reports were due to be submitted by 30th of April 2009. Thanks to the communities who have submitted their Annual Report. We are still waiting for Annual Reports from a few more communities.

Early Years Conference: The Early Years Literacy Strategy in Ballarat, Victoria, will hold its 3rd "Walking on Words" Early Years Literacy Conference on September. 13th and 14th 2009. This year's guest speakers include: Damian Callinan, Andrew Dado, Dr Cathie Harrison, Louise Dorrat and Dr Julie Dunn.

For further information check out : www.walkingonwords.com

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Dads, Babies and Books in Manning, NSW



The 'Engaging Dads' project is one of the successful Communities for Children strategies in this area on the NSW mid north coast.

A community worker has formed a productive partnership with local public hospitals so that he can attend their ante-natal classes to spend time with new Dads, reinforcing the importance of the father's role in parenting. Dads are then invited to sign up for the 'I'm a Dad' bag which is delivered to the first-time fathers in the maternity ward of the hospital. Let's Read resources (4month pack) are included in this bag for fathers.

Each ante-natal class is invited to a reunion once all of the babies in the group has been born, and then a large Christmas reunion is arranged for all the families who have had babies during that year. The local children's librarian, Deb Horgan, comes to these reunions to deliver a story time session and to talk to parents about reading with their babies.

Bilingual Storytimes and Songs

Since 2005, the Hume City Council west of Melbourne has been offering Bilingual Storytime sessions in local libraries and community settings. The sessions are presented in languages including Arabic, Turkish, Vietnamese, Assyrian and Sinhalese. Trained storytellers engage children aged 0-8 in storytelling, songs, rhymes and craft activities.

Recently the council has produced 2 CD's featuring favourite songs from those sessions, together with dual language songbooks. The *My Favourite Songs* CD's and songbooks will be made available for purchase by the public. If you are interested in purchasing any of these resources, contact: Anna Boland on (03) 9356 6999 or email annab@hume.vic.gov.au



A story from one of the Maternal & Child Health Nurses in Bendigo Victoria

...When I hand out the information re the Let's Read package, I always read the Brown Bear book to the baby. A few months back I read the book to a baby (4mths). This little baby is the youngest of 4 children. The baby responded happily to the book – touching the book, bouncing with pleasure on his mother's knee & making eye contact with me as I read Brown Bear. While this is happening I am being observed by the elder brother 5 years old...

A few months later when mother returned with her baby for the baby's 8 months assessment, we had this delightful conversation re Brown Bear...When they got home after the 4mth visit the elder brother decided to read Brown Bear to his baby brother.

What mother observed & stated was how delighted baby was when having the story read to him again, & that now it has become a nightly event. This mother explained that she had never realised (and this was her 4th child), how engaged a baby could be in having their own book & having it read to them at very young age every night.

Babies to Bookworms Let's Read launch at Hackham West, South Australia- Leann Koesters

The event was held on Wednesday 22nd April on a bright sunny day, and involved three significant sites in the Hackham West area including the Hackham West Children's Centre, Hackham West Primary School and Hackham West Community Centre



Fun literacy based activities were running all day at each of the sites including the local library storytellers and puppets, make your own book, star making, family treasures, year 7s from the primary school reading stories, bookmarks, fairy wands, playgym and more...

There was face painting and food galore with a healthy eating focus.

We really appreciated the time that was given to us by author Jo Fiedler who came along and read her new book *I Only Eat Toast* at two of the venues.

The whole day was free and families were encouraged to travel to each location to learn more, connect with their community and have great fun.

Lets Read was launched on the day and was well received. We were delivering Lets Read from the school, and many families were very interested in what was in the bags. At first they thought we were just giving away freebies but we managed to talk everyone into a conversation about reading with their children.



Many of the parents loved our ideas especially around taking the suggested reading lists to the library and getting children to hunt for the books.

The day was funded by Communities for Children as well as supported by many local community people and agencies including Save the Children, Learning Together and Communities for Children and a group of mums who have been scrapbooking together.

We currently have 10 trained community professionals in the Hackham community with many more people who would like to take part; we are ready to go as soon as money comes pouring in!!

Spreading the Word on the Dampier Peninsula

Sally Eaton, WA

Let's Read reaches children in the far north west of the country thanks to the wonderful team at Broome Library-and particularly due to the outreach work conducted by Sally Eaton. On a recent trip up the Dampier Peninsula, Sally stopped at One Arm Point and made some contacts with the Child Care Centre there. Sally shares with us, this story:

' While I was reading the book "I Went Walking" to one of the little boys, when he saw the dogs tail he didn't say "dog" but said "dingo" which is so great as it was relevant to his world. The same thing happened when the cow tail appeared and he said "bullock". He didn't need to read, but got the visual clues



Broome Conference report April 2009

On April 15th and 16th, Jeanette Miller represented Let's Read at the ATSLIRN (Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Resource Network) conference, *Rising to the Challenges*.

The conference was opened by keynote speaker Professor Patrick Dodson who, on the eve of the WA state government decision to go ahead with development of a gas plant on Aboriginal land north of Broome, bemoaned the fact that Aboriginal and white people in Australia still fail to listen to each other effectively.

Patrick's words reminded me of a story I'd heard in The Kimberley, of a white man, who, because he liked the local Aboriginal artwork which is carved onto Boab nuts by local indigenous people, asked one of the artists to make one for him. The Aboriginal artist, assuming the white man would like something from whitefella culture, carved him a picture of a car. The white man was disappointed with the result as he had wanted some authentic Aboriginal artwork.

Similarly, there is a danger when we as white service providers, assume that Aboriginal children need what we call 'Indigenous books'. When the Centre for Community Child Health researchers have consulted with Aboriginal families in The Pilbara and in far north Queensland, they have found indigenous families in



remote areas of this country who want their children to have the same books that are offered to the rest of Australia's children.

The lesson for all of us, is to make no assumptions, and to listen to each other carefully.

Some notable points made by early literacy program presenters included the plea from Gail Robinson of Deception Bay, to maximise the accessibility of libraries to 'hard-to-reach' families by providing lots of outreach work in communities, by creating 'Welcoming Places' for Indigenous people within libraries, and by ensuring there is no penalty for loss of library books.

Jeanette's presentation was titled *The Message and the Messenger* and focused on special considerations around messaging, and the delivery of those messages, when we are trying to effect behavioural change in programs like Let's Read. Effective messages are appealing, easily understood, accessible, timely, consistent, provide the best possible information, and are delivered by a trusted messenger.

The importance of our trained Let's Read 'messengers' cannot be emphasised enough. Knowing that parents are more likely to listen to messages and act upon them, if the person delivering the advice is someone they know, trust and respect, we ask community coordinators to invite to the Let's Read training, local professionals who already have good relationships with families. We also know that different families trust and respect different professionals to give them advice. That's why we train a wide range of people in the community- aiming to engage with as many parents as possible.

Jeanette talked about the family consultations conducted by CCCH in Indigenous communities of The Pilbara, Far North Queensland, Torres Strait Is. and Victoria, then gave as an example of a successful working partnership, our work with RACK in the Katherine Region. Through a process of identifying and building on local strengths, and providing on-going support, resources and training, Emma Clewlow has helped to improve access to early literacy activities in Aboriginal communities around the Katherine region. Children in these communities are now having fun with books from a very early age.



Kate King, who coordinates *The Walk to School* early years literacy strategy in Northern Territory, demonstrated Two Way Storytelling with an Aboriginal woman from Ti Tree Library. Each of the women read the story *Big Rain Coming* one page at a time, first in English, and then in a local Indigenous language.



Reading to Children Volunteers in Queensland

The week beginning May 11th 2009, marked National Volunteers Week. At our government-funded *Reading to Children* sites in Queensland, local older volunteers are resourced and trained to read with children in public places. Here is a summary of their recent activities:

Sunshine Coast (Maree Stratton)

The volunteer component of Let's Read has a small but very committed team of people offering read aloud sessions to our local community. A reading session is held at 10am on the third Monday of the month at Cotton Tree Park and every Friday morning at a local foster care playgroup. The response from parents and carers at these events has been very positive and the volunteers are enjoying their time reading to the children. During Volunteer Week (17.05.09 -10.06.09) the volunteers were presented with complimentary tickets to the Caloundra Races, and Certificates of Appreciation, at a small informal lunch.

Zillmere

Again a fairly small but dedicated group of volunteers. A regular park reading is held at 10am on the first Monday of the month at Kidspace-a wonderful local park. Readings are also held at an immunisation clinic at the Zillmere Community Centre on the first and third Thursdays of each month and again at a Refugee Health Clinic at the Zillmere Community Centre one or two Monday mornings a month. On Thursday 21st May the volunteers were presented with Certificates of Appreciation at morning tea after the immunisation reading.

Caboolture

Again a small group of volunteers who have a park reading near the library about 10am on the second Tuesday of the month. On Tuesday 19th May they were presented with Certificates of Appreciation after the park reading and at a small morning tea.

The volunteers occasionally read at the Neighbourhood Centre playgroup that is held every Friday morning.

Townsville (Fiona Mc Carthy)

We have about 12 volunteer readers. In terms of regular reading sessions, they take place in the following locations:



- Waiting room at the Indigenous Mums & Babies Clinic
- Weekly playgroup sessions for a Playgroup run by Qld Youth Services, for young mums 25 & younger
- Multiple Births Association Playgroup sessions
- Family Centre on RAAF base
- Prep classes (4-5 yr olds) at local Primary School

Mackay (Wendy Hone)

I have had two ladies who were very shy and quite retiring but they came along to a reading session at a Family Day Care Centre and just loved it. As the one said little children are very non-judgemental and are very forgiving. The one lady kind of lost her balance while sitting and the kids roared with laughter, they thought she was the funniest thing ever so she said how could she feel any embarrassment as they thought she was being so clever!! The volunteers loved it and said it was so worthwhile, as the rewards were so great for such little effort.



Rockhampton (Jane Ganter)

A 'Let's Read' volunteer came along to a playgroup for the first time, dubious about her own ability to engage young children, and interest them in the books she had brought. She sat on the floor, and in no time, three toddlers had come over to see what she had. One of these toddlers was fascinated with animal pictures, another wanted to turn the pages of 'Hooray for



Fish', and another 'commandeered' a book with pull-out truck and tractor shapes. Volunteers sing and dance to 'Toddlerobics', and use puppets to create an adventure with 'Rumble in the Jungle'. Volunteers in Mount Morgan and Rockhampton are enjoying the time they spend with young children in various playgroups and other places. Reading sessions don't always go to plan, but they are always great fun for the readers and children alike.

In Toowoomba and Coomera the volunteers are recruited by, and are based at, Community Agencies eg Kath Dickson Toy Library, The Heights Community Centre. Col Sutcliffe is responsible for skilling, approving and resourcing the volunteers and approving the Read Aloud sessions, but local people coordinate the program. This is building in sustainability as well as allowing Read Aloud sessions when Col cannot be there. He has developed a contract with the Agencies so that all are aware of their responsibilities.



In Redlands, Col coordinates the entire volunteer process, while in Ipswich, he has formed a partnership with Red Cross. He does the recruiting, skilling, approving and resourcing, and Red Cross coordinates the Read Aloud Sessions.

Essentially this means that 3 models are being developed.

Volunteers are involved in Prep Classes, Playgroups and Child Care Centres on a regular basis and as part of events eg Family Fun Days, Bookfests, Vacation Activities in Shopping Centres.

Once Volunteers complete training they 'graduate' with a Let's Read hat, Certificate and a name badge and then a morning tea. They enjoy the symbolism of this 'graduation' and have something to share with family and grandkids. They also enjoy the iced vo vos for vo vo olunteers at morning tea.

The focus of the Queensland Project Officers meeting in May, was on the volunteer component of the Reading to Children project. One of the actions is in place for a special event - *Blockes with Books* or similar - in the last half of the year. We are getting posters, and have stickers that say, 'Dads who read to their kids are cool.'

Let's Read in Tasmania

Jane Hudson, Community Facilitator, Tas

The big news for Tasmania is that all 29 Local Government Areas are now Let's Read communities. HOORAY!!!! Sharing Sessions have been held around the state for Steering Groups to hear how others have created successes and managed challenges. Training is still continuing for communities just at the starting up stage, and also for those who have been able to extend their provision of *Let's Read* to include new services and community-based professionals.

A *Let's Read* voucher will be issued to families by professionals who aren't able to deliver the program due to their case load and time constraints. This gives a double chance for families to access *Let's Read*: families making contact themselves and Coordinators making contact from the tear off piece of the voucher passed on by other supportive professionals.

A lovely story

On the last day of Term 1 in Launceston, East Launceston celebrated *Let's Read* at a school-based "Launching into Learning" playgroup. The Principal of the school read Za-Za's Baby Brother to the assembled families. Afterwards, a mother who has 2 children under school age, told one of the staff that she cried as she listened to the story. Za-Za's Baby Brother, which is given to all Tasmanian children at the 3½ age point touches a special spot in all parent's hearts, whoever they are and wherever they live.

Staff Updates

The Let's Read team recently farewelled Sally Mollison, Let's Read Trainer TAS. Sally's position was part of a 12 month contract. We thank Sally for her very valuable contribution to Let's Read in Tasmania.



Mione Caterer is excited to play a bigger part in the Let's Read community as the new Project Officer for *Let's Read* in Bundaberg Qld. Mione comes from a Speech Pathology background and has worked with children for the last 5 years with Education Queensland and Queensland Health in the Bundaberg region. In addition to her Let's Read role, she continues to work part time with a Multidisciplinary team, where they work with children between the age of 4 and 7, their families and schools. Mione is looking forward to helping bring the love of reading and books to Bundaberg.



News from the *Let's Read* evaluation team

Funded *Let's Read* evaluation activities are underway across 11 sites in Queensland and in two pilot sites in Victoria: Bendigo and Wyndham. In partnership with these sites, all evaluation tools have been reviewed and modified to make them more user friendly. Current tools include:

- The Baseline Parent Information Sheet;
- The Post-Intervention Parent Questionnaire and Information Letter;
- Pre-training Registration and Questionnaire;
- A survey for Professionals on their Experiences of Delivering *Let's Read*; and
- The NEW *Let's Read* Focus Group Kit.

The Evaluation Package and related tools are available in the secure section of the website: www.letsread.com.au \Let'sReadCommunities\CommunityProgramLog in\Delivering Let's Read Information Pack.....last item on the table.

This is an evolving process, with new tools developed as needed and existing tools being reviewed as feedback is received.

The survey for Professionals on their Experiences of Delivering *Let's Read* is being sent to all attendees of *Let's Read* training, 6 months after their training session. We encourage all those who are sent a link to this on-line survey to take the 5 minutes to complete it, as it is providing valuable feedback on how the *Let's Read* program is working for those delivering it. For example, the survey has indicated that follow up training and support would be valuable particularly when trained professionals move on. In response, individual and group training materials are being developed for on-line delivery.

The Baseline Information data collection is going well in the Victorian and Queensland sites with over 1000 baseline records received. This information is telling us that most families have positive attitudes towards reading and understand the importance of early literacy activities and, while all families can benefit from *Let's Read*, around 20% require the sort of support and encouragement that the *Let's Read* program provides to create a more positive home literacy environment.

The information is also telling us that *Let's Read* is successfully engaging with families from a range of language and cultural backgrounds and in such diverse locations as swimming lessons and correctional facilities.



Any questions and queries regarding the *Let's Read* evaluation or local evaluation reports or stories you would like to share can be sent through to the evaluation team on: evaluation@letsread.com.au

What's Coming Up?

The evaluation team want to document ways your community is delivering and responding to Let's Read...***Watch out for a Community Case Study Survey coming to your email box soon!***

Let's Read Promotional Products

The Let's Read stickers and postcards have been added to the order form on the website

Let's Read Calendar

We love receiving the many beautiful photos of parents, grandparents, helpers, babies and children sharing books together, which are sent to us from our Let's Read sites around the country.

If you have some special photos you would like to share with other early literacy fans, please email them to us. We will publish some of them in the coming newsletters for this year, and choose our top 12 favourites to feature in a Let's Read calendar for 2010.

Of course you will need to get signed consent from the parents of children photographed.

Here's a photo to inspire you to get out your camera!



Feedback

Have you had a wonderful idea? Developed a great new resource? Overcome a challenge? We'd love to hear about it. Help other Let's Read communities to thrive by sending us stories and photos to share in our next newsletter due out in September 2009. Contact us at metty.joseph@thesmithfamily.com.au

For starters

Share with us, the many creative ways your community has found to use the new Let's Read postcards to promote literacy in young children. We'll publish your ideas in the next newsletter.

