



# LET'S READ Newsletter

September 2009



**Welcome** to the third edition of the *Let's Read* Newsletter for 2009. This edition highlights Let's Read launches during Bookweek, in Elizabeth Vale SA, and in Hobart; ideas for engaging Dads in reading with children, as well as community news updates from New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia.

## Let's Read Community Annual Reports

The Let's Read Community Annual report (2008) template was e-mailed to all Let's Read communities (except those sites in Tasmania and Queensland which are government funded) at the end of March 2009. Thirty nine Let's Read communities submitted their 2008 Annual Reports.

Let's Read management would like to thank all those community-based professionals and organisations who have committed time during the past year, to delivering Let's Read to families, developing creative ways to engage families in emergent literacy activities, and collecting data to compile these annual reports.

The data you report to us is very useful in assisting us to further develop the Let's Read program, but it also provides information and ideas which can be shared with other Let's Read communities around the country. Take a look at a summary of all the reports collected, on the Let's Read website at:

<http://www.letsread.com.au/pages/documents/LetsReadCommunityAnnualReportsSummary2008pdf.pdf>

Hold down **Ctrl** key and click on the above link

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## Dads and Books



This lovely family photo was taken during development of a promotional poster for Let's Read in Tasmania. Jane Hudson, the Let's Read Community Facilitator



for Tasmania, tells us that the Dad naturally started singing *The Wheels on the Bus*, when his son opened that book. His little boy joined in, making the noises of the wipers, babies etc in the song. It was obvious that the pair were well used to sharing books together.



As Fathers' Day is traditionally celebrated in September, it seems timely to reflect on the issue of engaging Dads in early literacy activities with their children. Understanding the importance to little boys in particular, of shared reading experiences with the men who are important in their lives, many Let's Read professionals are keen to find creative ways to engage fathers in local early literacy activities.

The photo above was taken at the recent launch of Let's Read at Elizabeth Vale, South Australia, where staff invited The Crows footballers to read stories to local children, providing an opportunity for young children to see their local heros role model reading.

We'd love to hear about any initiatives you are using to engage Dads in reading with children at your site. Here are some examples from some of our NSW sites:

1. The Lismore site delivers Let's Read in their 'Dads Daycare' program.
2. In 2008, The Port Stephens site held seven 'Dads Twilight Storytimes'
3. The Fairfield site holds 'Storytime with Dad' at the municipal library.
4. Uniting Care Burnside staff at Coffs Harbour deliver the 4mth pack to new fathers as part of their 'I'm a Dad' pack which goes home from hospital with every newborn.
5. The Umina site has produced a bookmark with the message: 'Dads Who Read, Put their Kids in the Lead', and a paper folding game especially for fathers. Debbie Notara is happy to share those resources with other Let's Read communities. If you would like an electronic copy, please email [metty.joseph@thesmithfamily.com.au](mailto:metty.joseph@thesmithfamily.com.au)



- 6. The Qld Reading to Children sites have produced a sticker with the words: 'Dads who read to their kids are Cool'

### Bedtime Stories, Umina, NSW

**Debbie Notara, Facilitator**

During the July school holidays, parents and children 0 - 5 years were invited to come to Umina Library on the Central Coast of NSW to enjoy some morning bedtime stories. It was wonderful to see so many children come in their pyjamas, carrying a favourite bedtime toy and bringing their blankets to curl up in. It was great for the parents too, who didn't have to worry about getting their children dressed before going out!



Three story stations were set up throughout the library, and the children rotated between stations. The storytellers read bedtime stories while dressed in their pyjamas and dressing gowns. One of the favourite stories was "Time for Bed". The children spent an hour in a world of story and bedtime magic. Afterwards they enjoyed a hot chocolate and morning tea generously supplied by Baker's

Delight. \$5 book vouchers were also donated by a local bookshop.

Ninety children and their families attended and there were ten new memberships of the Library which was a fantastic outcome.

### Storytime in Exmouth, WA

**Jennifer Kogler, Exmouth Library & Telecentre**

One copy of each of the Let's Read books is on our shelves for borrowing, and the other three copies are in tubs that will be loaned out to 3 local community groups – Childcare, Child Health and the Playgroup.



We continue to offer Storytime Mondays at 9:30am, and we regularly see about 7-15 children with one or both of their parents, grandparents, or other caregiver. Over the past month our Storytime themes have focused on Australian animals.



Let's Read resource bags continue to be given out by us and the Toy Library as children reach their next age level.

### **Let's Read goes to Secondary School- Corio, Vic**

*Helen O'Connor, Family Centre Coordinator*

Corio, near Geelong in Victoria, is the site of the first Let's Read community in Australia. Since implementation of the program in 2005, Let's Read has been supported in Corio by Shell Australia.

The Corio Bay Senior College (CBSC) HUB project is a unique and innovative collaboration of services to support young parents and their families in Corio and the broader community. The HUB includes the CBSC, the Young Parents Access Project, the Childcare Centre, and the Family Centre. Together these services promote the 'Lets Read' project specifically assisting with the engagement of young families, and have evidenced significant successes as a result of this partnership.

In 2003, Corio Bay Senior College embarked on a new project called the Young Parents Access Project (YPAP) as a response to the increasing numbers of adolescents disengaging from their education as a result of pregnancy and the responsibilities of parenthood. With the support of this HUB of services, many young parents have been able to complete their schooling and go on to lead fulfilled, successful lives.

Accessible and affordable childcare was quickly identified as a crucial support required for young parents returning to school, and is also provided on-site in a registered 43-place purpose built building, utilised by student parents as well as the wider community.

The Family Centre forms the third initiative of the Corio Bay Senior College HUB vision. Parenting support and education, pre and postnatal information and outreach services, including as Maternal and Child Health, as well as five supported playgroups, form the core of the weekly activities. The Centre also provides for young parents a positive link into other vital family and community services.

According to Family Centre Coordinator, Helen O'Connor, 'Let's Read' has been an integral part of the programs and support offered to parents and children using the Family Centre. Let's Read bonds well with the philosophy of the Centre, and often informs the content of weekly programs.

A "Family Fun Play Day, was held at the Family Centre in June 2009. The Family Fun Play Day featured many early literacy activities and provided an important means to connect with local families with their local library. It was also a great opportunity to promote reading with young children, as the single most important activity that parents can undertake to develop and improve their child's future literacy skills and language development and promote parent/child socialisation and family/ community engagement.



A new program held at the Family Centre is the Karen Family Playgroup, providing a fun, social environment for both the parents and young children of these new migrant families from Burma and the refugee camps of Thailand. After many years in detention centres, these parents and their families are keen to learn English with their young children, and to build positive lives for themselves in their new home community. The "Lets Read" program has been well received by the Karen families with young children and they are now engaging with the Corio Library (a 'Let's Read' partner in the area), in a specific language building/early reading program. Reading groups are supported by volunteers at the library, using 'Let's Read' principles to encourage and support families with young children to read together.

### Baby Ways, NT

This delightful photo was taken by Emma Clewlow, the project officer for RACK ( Reading And Communicating with Kids), who delivers Let's Read to Aboriginal families in communities of the Katherine Region.



If you use the book in the photo ( Baby Ways) with your families, you might like to sing, rather than read the words, to the tune of the bouncing- on- the- knee song ' *This is the Way the Lady Rides*'.  
Eg. the first page would be sung as:

*This is the way the baby plays,  
The baby plays, the baby plays.  
This is the way the baby plays,  
Stack, Knock, Fall.*

If you'd like to hear what the song sounds like, Jane Hudson in Tasmania, gives a lovely rendition over the phone!

### Katherine Region

**Emma Clewlow, RACK Project Officer**

Over the last 3 weeks, families at the Barunga, Rockhole and Binjari Aboriginal Communities have been reading/learning the story of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'. We have decided to make this into a bit of a project, being the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the book. The Reading Mentors have been given 'templates' which they have been colouring in 'at home' and we are going to make puppets using cardboard and paddle pop sticks. We are also going to make a collage of a caterpillar and butterfly using coloured tissue paper etc. At the end of the project each Mentor/parent who has participated will receive their very own copy of the book that they can colour in themselves. We have also made caterpillars and butterflies using play doh.





## Bookweek Activities

*Giovanna Rico, Learning for Life Worker, Maddington, WA*

The Gosnells Early Years Action Group in metropolitan Perth, launched their *Bonding with Books* initiative on August 27<sup>th</sup> 2009, with a free storytime event officially launched by the mayor of Gosnells, at Centro shopping centre in Maddington.



Families were given books as gifts- a gesture made possible by donations from publishers Scholastic Australia, Lifetime Distributors and Allen & Unwin. Storytelling and story reading sessions for children, gave local families a taste of what will then be offered for their children at the shopping centre on the first Thursday of every month.

Delivery of Let's Read packs was also made at the event. Let's Read is sponsored by Shell Australia in Maddington.

## Let's Read Launch, Elizabeth Vale, SA

*Sian Taylor, Learning for Life Worker*

In South Australia, The City of Playford's Let's Read Launch took place on Tuesday the 25<sup>th</sup> of August with over 100 people in attendance. Families engaged in fun, free activities run by local Early Years sites. There was face painting, readings by various local authors and a sausage sizzle.



Keith Conlon and two Adelaide Crows Players; Scott Thompson and Brad Moran, also helped us celebrate the launch, reading various Let's Read books to the children (see photo pg. 2) and signing library bags that were made and donated by Gawler VIEW club. The event was very successful, with the Playford Mayor showing his solid support for the program's growth in the area.

## Hobart Launch

*Jane Hudson, Community Facilitator, Tas*

Monday 24<sup>th</sup> August was a celebration Day in Tasmania. The day marked the launch of Let's Read in the last of the 29 LGA's. The Deputy Mayor made the



official launch and Tasmanian Tigers cricketer, Brett Geeves and Larissa Bartlett, the wife of the Premier David Bartlett, read to children from local child care centres and the assembled crowd. It was a fine spring morning: most welcome after days of stormy and windy weather!

MakeBelieve Children's Entertainment and the Fun Bugs sang songs and rhymes to the children, encouraging them to join in with the actions and dancing. They also sang the Let's Read theme Song "Let's Catch the Reading Bug", which was written by Kay Hamilton from Burnie Let's Read and Michelle Pears from MakeBelieve Children's Entertainment.



At the launch, Jane Hudson Let's Read Coordinator for Tasmania, launched a Let's Read poster for use in Tasmania. This will be displayed in public places where families access services: the local Council office, Medicare, Centrelink and the local Library.

## **Reading to Children site updates- Queensland**

### **Townsville**

#### **Let's Read Goes to Prison by Jenni Pack**

When I did the Let's Read training sessions in Townsville almost 6 months ago, I was excited at the prospect of being able to make a contribution to raising literacy levels in the community.

I am a prison chaplain, and I could see the potential of delivering Let's Read packs to families who are caring for the young children of prisoners. I was able to deliver packs to a grandmother, for 3 of the 6 grandchildren she was caring for, while her daughter was in prison. I also delivered 3 packs to a young mum who was released from prison early this year. This month I will be able to deliver the 4 month pack to her for her son, who was born in May.

Even more exciting, is that the Correctional Centre has allowed the delivery of Let's Read packs to the mothers who have their young children with them in the prison. Although these mums have more time to spend with their young children, they generally lack role modelling, and resources.

I knew that a playgroup had been started once a week, but it was only when I met the coordinator of the playgroup at the Let's Read training session, that it occurred to me to approach the prison, to see if packs could be delivered for



these children through the playgroup. Initially there was a question as to whether the mothers would be able to have the DVDs. Officers were most supportive of the initiative, and suggested that if that was the case, they could play the DVD through the prison system. The outcome was fantastic, with mothers being allowed to have the DVDs to play in the mothers and babies unit.

This prison has taken up the opportunity afforded by Let's Read, to make a positive contribution to literacy levels in particular, and the community in general.

### **Mount Morgan/Rockhampton**

**Jane Ganter, Project Officer**

Terry Thirkettle (photo) is the ESL teacher at Lakes Creek State School (Rockhampton), and has been using dual language books with the large number of Vietnamese students at the school.



As part of Under 8s day celebrations at Lakes Creek State School (August 2009), Terry set up an ESL booth. Her Vietnamese speaking students had practised for some time, reading the dual language picture story books in both Vietnamese and English.

On Under 8s day, students from the school came to the booth and could choose to be read to in either English or Vietnamese. This event proved very popular with students of all ages and all cultural backgrounds. What a creative way of introducing students to different cultures and languages!

Terry has been presenting 'Let's Read' books bags to families associated with the school for more than a year. When she has heard from her Vietnamese students about a family having a new baby, she requests permission to visit the family, to see the new baby. She uses the opportunity to take a 4 month old book bag to give to the family as a gift.

I was recently able to give Terry more dual language books with new titles. She sent me a brief email: "books have gone down a treat!! The kids are so excited as am I. Thanks again Jane you are like Santa to us".

### **Zillemere, Caboolture & Sunshine Coast**

**Maree Stratton, Project Officer**

#### **Letter from a Parent**

I attend an Indigenous playgroup in Nambour which a Let's Read volunteer comes to regularly. She uses puppets to bring her reading to life and the kids love it.

I have four children aged seven and under and since hearing from the volunteer and receiving the Let's Read packs from Angie my playgroup leader, it's encouraged me to read with the family at home, as well as at the playgroup.

We've started reading together as a family every night. Making that time has benefited all of us. It's a lot of fun and really opened up my eyes to the point





where I'm now reading to my seven-month-old, which I wouldn't have done before.

It's helped my two-year-old especially because he's a little bit slower with talking and just reading every night and getting him to point things out in the books, like the DVD suggests, has really helped his vocabulary. I've noticed that change in him.

Getting a two year old to sit down and listen is hard, but he knows when it's reading time and he now wants to listen along with the other kids and he likes to interact with the book as well.

The DVD gave me some more ideas for making reading interesting. It gave me the great idea of taking books in the car instead of taking the toys and now I've always got books in my car.



### **Mackay**

**Happy Birthday Let's Read!** - from Wendy Hone and Col Sutcliffe



To celebrate the first anniversary of Let's Read in Mackay, a Teddy Bears' Picnic was held on August 21st in the Mackay Botanic Gardens, for families of children birth five. Around 300 people attended, to enjoy stories, outdoor play, picnic morning tea, and birthday cake.



## News from the *Let's Read* evaluation team

*Paula Wood and Rachel Robinson*

The *Let's Read* Evaluation Summary to June 30<sup>th</sup> 2009 has been completed and includes data from 1389 Baseline records and 96 Parent Surveys, from the Queensland and Victorian sites, along with data from 344 pre-training registrations, 148 training participants and 42 Community based professionals delivering *Let's Read* nationally.

The data from Community based professionals shows that all who have responded thus far believe that *Let's Read* is an effective way to promote reading with young children from birth to 5 years of age. Most also reported that *Let's Read* is an effective way to begin ongoing conversations with parents regarding early literacy, as well as reporting that there have been 'other' positive outcomes for families as a result of the *Let's Read* discussions. Some of the 'other' outcomes included: 'The bonding between parents and children during reading together'; 'Young parents reading with children rather than watching TV' and; 'Attendance at other activities (e.g. story time) and creating social networks'.

The key findings from the Parent Surveys collected to June 30 suggested that: The majority of respondents from both Victoria and Queensland reported that they were satisfied with the program and materials and reported changes to both their own and others' reading behaviour with children in response to the *Let's Read* program - approximately half report that this behaviour has changed either 'quite a bit' or 'a great deal'. The key behaviour change reported in both Victoria and Queensland is a "change to the way I communicate with my child". This data is encouraging because it seems to indicate that parents are implementing the reading strategies suggested in *Let's Read* and in particular those outlined in the Parent Information Sheets. Behaviour change in relation to buying or borrowing suggested books was reported by about half of Victorian respondents and one third of Queensland respondents, and suggestions regarding how to read with children were taken up by approximately 80% of Victorian respondents and about half of Queensland respondents. The reading suggestions most reported to have been tried by respondents for both Queensland and Victoria were: 'All suggestions'; 'Turning off the TV or radio'; and 'Reading the same story often'.

Thank you to those communities who have completed and returned the Case Study Survey to us – there have been seven so far and each have unique stories of innovative practices for getting the *Let's Read* messages out to their communities. These have included: community literacy events such as a Teddy Bears Picnic, a story time in the park with various reading stations, and story times at playgroups and; delivering *Let's Read* to isolated families at home visits, at playgroups and during visits to new mums in hospital.

**We would love to hear about your community's activities**, and if you have missed out on the survey and would like to contribute, or have any questions and queries regarding the *Let's Read* evaluation, local evaluation reports or stories you would like to share, please contact the evaluation team on: [evaluation@letsread.com.au](mailto:evaluation@letsread.com.au)



The full Let's Read evaluation summary will be available on the Let's Read website soon.

### Staff Updates

#### ***Introducing the Let's Read team at the Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne***



**Rachel Robinson (centre):** As Manager, Service Development at the Centre for Community Child Health, my role coordinates service development and evaluation to ensure that the Let's Read program materials, training and delivery approaches bring the best outcomes for families and children and continue to meet the needs of professionals and communities.

**Paula Wood (left):** has been working two days a week at the Centre for Community Child Health on the Let's Read evaluation project over the last 10 months. During this time she has been collecting and collating training evaluation material, information about professionals' experiences of delivering *Let's Read*, six months after training, and baseline and post-intervention data from *Let's Read* in two Victorian sites - City of Greater Bendigo and the City of Wyndham and from the eleven *Let's Read* sites funded by the Queensland Government. She has also been working with *Let's Read* colleagues to develop evaluation materials that are acceptable to community professionals, volunteers and participants in these sites and planning and publishing a range of tools that can be used in *Let's Read* sites that are not directly supported to conduct evaluation activities.'

**Erica Gardner (right)** Hi, my name is Erica Gardner I am the new Project Officer for Let's Read at the Centre for Community Child Health at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute. My role will be to develop some Let's Read online training, update the original Literature Review that was used to develop Let's Read, and also to update the website. I come from a teaching background. My experiences with culturally and linguistically diverse children and also with those on the Autism Spectrum have lead me to develop a passion for language, literacy and reading. I feel very excited and fortunate to be a part of the Let's Read Community.



### Welcome back Elizabeth!

Elizabeth Sayers returns from Maternity Leave in September, to once again head the Queensland team of project officers. Our grateful thanks to Maree Stratton and Col Sutcliffe who held the reins while Elizabeth cared for Emelia at home.

### Goodbye Jeanette

After almost 2 years as National Trainer, and more recently, as Implementation Facilitator, Jeanette Miller is leaving the Let's Read team. She would like to thank the wonderful national team, and all the site coordinators and professionals with whom she has worked, for their support, for sharing their stories and ideas, and for their good humour, and companionship.

## Let's Read Promotional Products to Purchase

### Nursery Rhyme Cards



The Let's Read site in Bendigo, Victoria, has produced a set of 24 brightly-coloured cards, each depicting an illustrated Nursery Rhyme. Children in the area will be given a card each time they eg borrow a book, attend a storytime.....until they have collected the whole set. The cards are postcard size ( 14.7cm x 10.5cm ) so that they can fit into a 'Brag Book' with plastic pockets. This means that once a child has collected the whole set of cards, they will end up with their own book of Nursery Rhymes.

The printer who is producing the cards in Bendigo, is willing to sell sets of the cards to our Let's Read communities, and to deliver them around the country. His contact details, and the prices of the card sets, are as below:

1 set	\$24.00
20 sets	\$15.70 each
50 sets	\$12.40 each
100 sets	\$10.80 each
200 sets	\$10.00 each

Steve Bright  
Bart'n Print  
18 Deborah St.  
Golden Square, 3550  
Victoria  
Ph: (03)5441 6600  
[steve@bartnprint.com.au](mailto:steve@bartnprint.com.au)

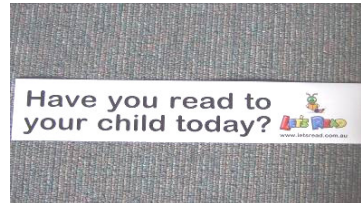


### Coasters and Bumper Stickers

These newly-developed resources will shortly be added to the order form on the website.



Absorbent Card Coaster  
Size: 8cm square  
Price: \$1.50 (ex.gst)



Glossy Self Adhesive Bumper Sticker  
Size: 31cm x 7cm  
Price: \$2.00 (ex.gst)

### Food for Thought

The following is an abridged version of an article by Dr Anne Kennedy: *Defining Values in Early Childhood Education*, published in fka Children's Services: Resource no 130, February 2007.

Australian values have been a focus of discussion over the past few years as Governments, institutions, community groups and individuals debate what they are and why they are important..... In a multicultural society such as Australia this is a very complex matter because of the diversity of ideas on what matters.

Stereotyping families, children and colleagues is an occupational hazard in ECE. Stereotypes develop from unexamined and outdated value positions including being fearful of, or unfamiliar with differences or needing conformity. These values tend to breed attitudes leading to stereotypes and are evident in statements such as:

- 'All the Chinese families'
- 'All new graduates...'
- 'All childcare children...'

Any time the word 'all' is used to define a group or to make value judgments about a group we should be sceptical, and courageous to speak up: Do you really mean all, or do you mean some, or do you mean a particular one?

Such labels ignore everyone's right to be treated with respect and to be listened to.

(One).. strategy to help people confront their bias or stereotypes is to think about the idea of 'the Other'. Using a capital 'O' in this word is deliberate as it highlights a new understanding of otherness. Often we want to make 'the Other' like ourselves so that we can feel comfortable or we try to understand 'the Other' from our own perspective: 'how would I feel if I was in their shoes?' The new understanding of 'the Other', is to focus on understanding how they feel and act,



not to change them, or to shift it to how we would act in the same circumstances, but to listen and respect their position.

This requires being comfortable with differences and discord at times. To understand or recognize 'the Other' in this way has been called 'Other regarding' which is the opposite of 'self regarding'.

An example of 'Other regarding'

A common scenario could be when early childhood staff express concerns about a family that doesn't provide or read picture books to their children. Using 'the Other' approach, the focus would be on trying to understand why the children do not have books or stories read to them, rather than on trying to 'teach' the parents about the value of books and story reading for children's literacy learning.

In this scenario staff would listen and learn about the family, and at the same time recognize that their ideas on the value of picture books are as strange to the family as the family's failure to provide books is strange to them. The message sent to the family would then be that their ways are not wrong, just different, and that staff are not making negative assumptions, but are seeking to understand. And if children's books and story reading do not become part of the family tradition, the staff value that choice and can provide book experiences in the centre.

Through the process of trying to understand 'the Other', staff may also discover that the children do have valuable literacy experiences through other means such as the family's religious observances which could include daily Koran readings, prayers and stories about their faith history. In this instance the literacy skills and pleasure associated with exposure to books would instead be gained through the family's faith practices which are still providing the child with an awareness of the power and purpose of print, participation in the rhythms and forms of oral language, knowledge of story formats, and enjoyment of the beauty of the language.

### 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 December 2009. Contact us at [metty.joseph@thesmithfamily.com.au](mailto:metty.joseph@thesmithfamily.com.au)

