



LET'S READ Newsletter

December 2009



Welcome to the last edition of the *Let's Read* Newsletter for 2009. This edition highlights the Let's Read launch in Port Pirie SA and provides community news updates from New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia.



XMAS & New Year Break

Let's Read National Office (Vic) will be closed for Xmas & New Year from 24th December 2009 to 4th January 2010 and our Distribution Centre will be closed from 22nd December 2009 to 11th January 2010. If you wish to place an order for Let's Read resources, please fax it to us before 15th December 2009.



Let's Read Launch in Port Pirie, SA

Belinda Siviour, The Smith Family Learning for Life Worker



On Tuesday 20th October 09' Let's Read was launched in Port Pirie, South Australia. We have a partnership with the Department of Education and Children's Services - Learning Together at Home program, and the Crows Foundation, to bring Let's Read to the Port Pirie community. Mayor Brenton Vanstone opened the event thanking the families for attending and The Smith Family for their work



Initiative of:



Inaugural corporate sponsor:



in the community. Approximately 200 preschool students and their families attended the event held during National Children's week at Memorial Park. The children enjoyed a slice of Let's Read cake to celebrate the official launch of the program whilst listening to a number of books being read to them by Geoff Brock (Member for Frome) and Margie Arnold (owner of Meg's Bookshop).

Our launch coincided with Port Pirie's 'Fun Day in the Park', which saw the children participating in different learning activities organised by the local kindergartens, Child and Youth Health, Environmental Health Service, Tiny Tots, Tenby10, and the Metropolitan Fire Service.



Beachside Family Centre Let's Read - NSW

Debbie Notara, Facilitator - Beachside Family Centre

At Beachside Family Centre, since beginning our program, we have distributed 180 baby book bags to our target group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, young mums and families in need of literacy support (including families from CALD background). The Baby Book Bags are distributed by Child and Family Health Nurses (to young mums and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island families), Young Parent Worker and Aboriginal Early Intervention workers and Supported Playgroup (including Aboriginal Supported Playgroup).

We have used a borrowing system for the From 18 months group; it has proven very successful in some settings. The parents have borrowed all of the Let's Read books and were asking for more so we are organising for the local library to come and visit with some more books and for the families to go to the library for a special visit to encourage them to join up and use the library regularly.

Our Babes with Babes group (young mums doing their continuing TAFE education) have also received Baby Book Bags and been borrowing. This group also had a special visit to the library where all the children joined, received their library cards and continue to use that resource.

Family day care has come on board with our borrowing program with all the family day carers owning a Let's Read DVD to show to the children and lend out to parents. Initially the carers were given a range of books to lend out to families but we are now planning to have sets of particular books so that the same Let's Read book can be read to the children at Family Day Care and then borrowed by the child to take home and be read by parents and carers. One of the young mum's children just loved "Time for Bed" so we were able to give her a copy to keep.

Let's Read is a part of a larger community run early literacy strategy called the START (Sit Together and Read for Ten minutes a day) Reading Project. We promote Let's Read at other events we run such as Storytime in the Park and Morning Bedtime Stories in the Library.

We are looking forward to another exciting year with Let's Read where we can reach more and more of our target families.

Bribie Island Let's Read - QLD

Kathy Donovan

The Literacy and Numeracy Support Teacher from Bribie Island State School, Kathy Donovan, heard about Let's Read from neighbouring Caboolture. Caboolture is a Reading to Children Initiative site funded by the State Government's Office for Early Childhood Education and Care.

Kathy immediately rallied her community, procured funds and has introduced Let's Read to the island community. Teachers and assistants from the community preschool have already attended training and are delivering Let's Read to their



children as well as teachers from several local government and non government schools.

Brimbank Let's Read – VIC

Jeanine Carter, The Smith Family Community Development Learning For Life worker

Brimbank Best Start has allocated funding to undertake Lets Read in Brimbank.

The Community planning committee has decided to implement the program through Maternal and Child Health Nurses, Family Support Workers and playgroups. The playgroups will include a Vietnamese, multicultural and Burmese group.

The first Training Session of 15 professionals took place on 20th October. Participants were from Libraries, family support services and playgroups.

The Lets Read Program in Brimbank will also link to other reading promotion events being undertaken in the area over the next year such as Literacy Week and reading sessions in the Sunshine Market Place.

Colac Let's Read - VIC

Kay Widdicombe, HIPPY Coordinator

Let's Read Training was provided to library staff, HUB Inc volunteers, and Glastonbury Child and Family Services Staff who will be involved in the delivery of the Let's Read program in family's homes

Due to the Young Readers program being delivered to children at the 4 month group, it was decided to target the older age groups in 2009 and the 4 month group in the following year.

The parents of 12 and 18 month olds were targeted through families receiving the PLAY Program with Glastonbury Child and Family Services. The parents of 3 ½ year olds were targeted through families receiving the HIPPY program with Glastonbury Child and Family Services. This would reach 65 families in the first year and 95 families in 2010. All these parents received a Lets Read parent information sheet, a book list appropriate to the age level, and a book. Also included was a library flyer and a toy library flyer. The library was resourced with additional copies of books that are included on the book lists and DVD's to be loaned to individual families through their PLAY and HIPPY mentors. They are to be shown on first visits to the home. The DVD's were particularly helpful for Sudanese mothers reading the book to their children. All parents were very enthusiastic in receiving their packs and loved the books.

Further outreach to families will be dependent on securing an increased level of funding. This year is currently funded by Regional One Credit Union and funding has been secured for 2010 through the CLICK Local Answers initiative funding with Glastonbury Child and Family Services. Further funding will be sourced during 2010 to enable a wider roll-out of Lets Read in the Colac community.



Shell Book Drive Initiative Fills up Broome Library Shelves - WA

Sally Eaton

A thank you from Broome Library for the box of books donated by a Shell employee

In June 2009 the Let's Read team labelled and sent a box of books, around \$200 worth, to Broome Library. The books had been donated by a Shell employee. Sally from Broome Library used the books for storytime sessions on her outreach visits to communities.

I went up the Dampier Peninsula last week as a part of the Ardiyooloon Road Safety and Healthy Lifestyle Expo that was held in the Ardiyooloon (One Arm Point) Community at the top of the peninsula. The Expo was staffed by a collection of agencies including government, community-based organisations and local services. It also included amenities aimed at primary and pre-primary kids including a bouncy castle that got quite the workout on the day!



The Library's presence at the Expo had an immediate response with our first and near-to youngest guest showing up before I'd even finished setting up. The school was heavily involved with every class coming out to learn about healthy living, nutrition, safety in the home, being drug-aware and to have a bit of fun as well. We didn't plan a formal program for the day that would include each class visiting the Library's area, but a combination of balloon giveaways, a colouring-in table, plenty of books and puzzles and our proximity to the bouncy castle ensured that I was kept busy throughout the day.

As the day went on, we found that the Library's area became a safe area for some of the kids who drifted away from their classes or needed a bit of a break. In talking with and engaging these kids I found a whole group of kids that adored reading at school and many of them who enjoyed reading to younger siblings or other family members.

Each of the kids who took away a book that day were clutching them as if they were the most precious thing they had.



Kwinana Let's Read – WA

Leanne Barker, Let's Read Co-ordinator

In Kwinana, WA the Lets Read Co-ordinator Leanne Barker from Kwinana Early Years Services thought she would try something a little different and include puppets in her story telling to engage the audience. Leanne visited the Town of Kwinana Bright Futures Family Day Care Scheme to deliver a Let's Read Presentation to the Indigenous playgroup who meets weekly. "Who Sank the Boat" by Pamela Allen was read to the children, with puppets loaned from the local council library to compliment the story. This proved to be a very successful and interactive presentation of Let's Read.



The Let's Read message was shared with a group of local Indigenous Elders visiting Kwinana Early Years Services encouraging them to read to their grandchildren. The Let's Read message would then in turn be passed on to the grandchildren's primary carers.

Queensland Reading with Children Sites

Teddy Bears Reading Festival on the Sunshine Coast

Maree Stratton, Let's Read Project Officer

The present and future prep children of Nambour State School along with local playgroups recently participated in a Teddy Bears Reading Festival. Local community members including a local author, librarian, paramedics, police officers, fire officers, a museum curator, a truck driver, an oral health therapist and a nurse had fun reading stories about their profession and about teddy bears.



The children were divided into small groups and rotated around the readers. A teacher dressed in a teddy bear costume, the canteen ladies made teddy bear shaped pikelets and the children brought their teddy bears from home and wore teddy bear ears they had made in class. The children had a wonderful day and the readers are already talking about making it an annual event



Letter from a Parent on the Sunshine Coast

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, 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.

Fun Day at Caboolture

In September the volunteers from Caboolture assisted with a Let's Read information stall and reading corner at the Council organised Fun Day. The day was quite hot and we did have to follow the shade but our little corner was quite popular with parents as they were invited to have a seat in the shade while their children were read to. Many of the children were used to being read to but some parents were quite surprised at how much their children enjoyed being read stories, especially when accompanied by puppets or music. We had many assurances that sharing books would become a more regular event in many households.





Government Funding Announcement for Far North Queensland, Cape York and Torres Strait Communities!!

On 27th October the Queensland Premier Anna Bligh launched over \$500,000 in new funding for the Reading to Children initiative in Far North Queensland, Cape York and Torres Strait communities.

Ms Bligh said the funding of \$125,685 per annum over four years will enable The Smith Family to extend the delivery of its early childhood literacy program, Let's Read, from 11 to 14 regions across Queensland.

Premier Bligh said the new funding will help ensure all Queensland children are given the best chance at success later on in life through the development of vital literacy skills.

"We want strong futures for all Queensland children, especially for Indigenous students, where there still exists a significant gap between educational achievement and outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students," she said.

"This funding will be used to recruit and train hundreds of volunteers such as grandparents in the communities to read to young children.

Let's Read Story Time at City Centre Plaza - Rockhampton *Jane Ganter, Let's Read Project Officer*

In a busy, noisy shopping centre, we set up 'Let's Read Story Time'.

As parents walked by with their children, they paused to look at the beautiful book display. Many who looked were happy to come and sit down, and listen to a story (or three!) We were amazed at the variety of nationalities who visited us that morning. As well as many Aussie families, we also had families from Germany, Brazil, Zimbabwe, New Zealand, Korea, and Japan.



While two volunteers read to the children, we were able to talk to the parents about reading to their children and the 'Let's Read' materials. This also enabled us to make arrangements to provide 'Let's Read' book bags for those who hadn't yet received them, and to provide Dual Language books for some families.

There was a constant flow of people past our 'Story Time' area: out thanks goes to the Shopping Centre management for providing us with a great location. During the three hours of 'Story Time', we had only a few spare minutes here and there with no clients.



We've been invited to hold regular 'Story Time' sessions in the shopping centre. The volunteers who did such a wonderful job of reading to the children enjoyed the time as much as we did.

Let's Read Story Time at Stockland Shopping Centre with BigW Christmas Launch in Rockhampton

When we were asked if 'Let's Read' would like to participate in the Christmas Launch at Big W, we were happy to take up the opportunity. We were provided with a clearly defined area, with table and chairs set up. Appropriately, our 'Let's Read' area was right in the centre of the book department of Big W.



Many people who passed by were happy for their children to sit and listen to a story or three! While a 'Let's Read' volunteer read to the children, we were able to talk to the parents about the project, and arrange to provide books for those who hadn't already received them. Stickers and other 'Let's Read' promotional items were very popular. Big W management was happy with the outcome, and would like 'Let's Read' to be part of other events they hold in the future.

One valuable contact made at the Big W Christmas launch (report above) was an adoptive mother of two Chinese children. As a result of this contact, we were invited to the Christmas Party of the Adoptive Parents Support Group. It was a pleasure to meet with this group, talk about 'Let's Read', and provide book bags for their young children. These children were of Thai, Korean, and Chinese origin.

A community health nurse (who did *Let's Read* training in 2008) is part of this group and will provide on-going resources and support for the adoptive parents group.

SAIMA Torres Strait Island Corporation

Through a contact in the Education Department, we were able to meet with Anne, the Arts and Cultural co-ordinator for the Torres Strait Islander Corporation in Rockhampton. As soon as we started talking about the 'Let's Read' Project and showed her the books and other resources, she became excited about the possibility of providing book bags for the young children within the Torres Strait Islander community.

Anne completed the training as a Community Professional. She was eager to start delivering resources to families within the community as soon as possible. Anne herself is an author and illustrator of culturally specific books, and we encouraged her to write stories suitable for young children.



Toowoomba Teddy Bear's Picnic ...

Col Sutcliffe, Let's Read Project Officer

On a beautiful sunny November Sunday Let's Read volunteers and The Smith Family Toowoomba staff gathered in Queen's Park, Toowoomba to have a Teddy Bear's Picnic. Over a hundred youngsters and their parents came to have a treasure hunt, face painting, small group activities, fun on the playground and read aloud sessions. Readers were Sam the Fairy resplendent in blue, volunteer readers of all ages and Toowoomba Regional Councillor Bill Cahill. During the morning books were provided to the children to read to their teddies and for mums and dads to read aloud at home.



Toowoomba Read Aloud in the Park

The Heights Community Centre in Toowoomba recently facilitated a day of activities in the local park for the community to get to know one-another and what happens in the community. Let's Read were invited to participate in providing Read Aloud Sessions as well as activities for the children.

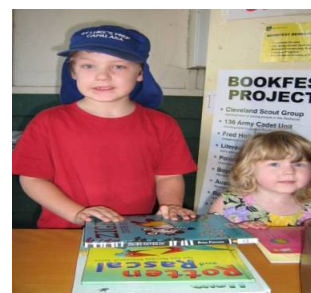


One of the favourite fun things was face painting of book characters. Volunteers from The Heights Community Centre with support from Let's Read also conduct weekly Read Aloud Sessions at 2 local primary schools, Wilsonton and Rockville as well as fun sessions at the local shopping centre during school vacations.

Redlands Bookfest

Col Sutcliffe

In conjunction with the Rotary Club of Capalaba's recent Bookfest to support early years literacy initiatives of the Redlands Community Centre in the Redlands and the Fred Hollows Foundation in the Northern Territory, Let's Read volunteers provided read aloud sessions and supplied brochures and books highlighting the value of reading every day to youngsters under 5 as a necessary building block for success at school.





As the Bookfest coincided with Halloween some youngsters came appropriately dressed.

Let's Read in Tasmania

Jane Hudson, Let's Read Coordinator, TAS

Events

When there's an event or celebration in a Let's Read community, Jane Hudson, Let's Read State Coordinator will attend and bring along a large selection of books for children and their families to enjoy. This is a wonderful opportunity to talk with parents and carers about Let's Read and sharing books with little ones, to show them the sort of books which are supportive and engaging for children, and find out about favourite books and things they enjoy doing together.

Tiny Tots on show in Georgetown

Let's Read was part of the Early Years Expo in Georgetown in November.

Over 200 hundred families visited the event to find out about the services which support parents/carers with young children in the Georgetown Municipality. The Let's Read books were set up for families to enjoy as they waited in the shade next to the Jumping Castle.



Burnie Let's Read



Burnie Let's Read held a reading event in Burnie Park in November. Lots of school-based birth to 4 programs, child care centres and families came to the beautiful park by the sea in Burnie to share books and songs together.

Teddy Bears Picnic in Launceston

During Children's Week in October, PlaygroupTas organised a Teddy Bears picnic in City Park in Launceston.

Everyone brought their Teddy, so the Let's Read quilt was an important rest and relaxation spot during a busy, noisy morning.



Brown Bear

It is beginning to emerge in Tasmania, that Brown Bear, Brown Bear is the favourite book of many babies and toddlers. Here is a letter from teacher Lynn Wyllie, telling about Let's Read and Brown Bear, Brown Bear in her Birth to 4 program.

The 'Let's Read' initiative has added to our Launching into Learning Programs at Ravenswood Heights Primary in many ways. It has been a conversation starter about early literacy with parents; it has been a concrete way to demonstrate to parents how to enjoy books with their children.



Most recently, at our Baby Playgroup I was reading a book to a little boy who is 10 months old when his dad called out, "he is more of a 'Brown Bear, Brown Bear' man". I had a copy of this in board book form and picked it up to read to this little boy. He obviously had shared this book many, many times with his dad because the level of engagement and enjoyment was incredible. Every time I finished reading "what did you see?" he would look at me and smile and wait for the next bit. This little boy has very poor muscle tone and core strength so is unable to do what the other babies are doing in terms of rolling, crawling etc but he was a perfect example of a child who has loved spending time with his parents with favourite books. Dad said he had received the book through 'Let's Read' and that he really liked it and that his son enjoyed reading it with him. The pride his dad felt was enormous and it was a powerful example to other parents.

Staff Updates

Sue Scarr, New Project Officer for Bundaberg

My name is Sue and I am the newly appointed project officer for Bundaberg. My background is in Health Promotion, Public Relations and Fundraising. I've also worked for Education Queensland as a remedial reading tutor which I found very rewarding. I have studied Health Promotion and Professional Communication at CQUniversity and hope these skills can be utilised in my position with Let's Read. I was attracted to Let's Read because I believe everyone's personal situation can be improved through a higher standard of literacy.



Sue has been busy reconnecting with her Community Deliverers and Let's Read volunteers and everyone is keen for a very productive 2010 for Let's Read in Bundaberg.



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 March 2010. Contact us at metty.joseph@thesmithfamily.com.au

From the Let's Read Team



"Season's Greetings & Best Wishes for the New Year!"

We look forward to working with you in 2010

