



# LET'S READ

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## Corio first to introduce new literacy program

Corio will be the first community in Australia to introduce a new early childhood literacy program, Let's Read, that encourages parents to read aloud with their children from as young as four months.

A joint initiative of the Centre for Community Child Health Health (a key research centre of the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute) and The Smith Family, Let's Read aims to give families the information and tools they need to introduce their pre-school aged children (0-5 years) to books in a bid to improve Australia's literacy levels.

Let's Read will be coordinated in Corio by Best Start in partnership with the Geelong Regional Library Corporation's Corio Library. Health professionals including Maternal Child Health Nurses and speech therapists will provide local families with a special Let's Read pack including information on how to read with babies and toddlers, a list of suggested books for different age groups, and a DVD showing ways to read aloud and have fun with books .

The packs will be made available to families in Corio free of charge, thanks to the program's inaugural corporate supporter, Shell.

"Shell wants to invest in the future of Corio's children and Let's Read provides a unique opportunity to do that," said Shell Geelong external affairs manager, Joan McGovern. "Nationally, Shell has been committed to Let's Read since its planning stages and we're pleased to see it now delivered in our own community."

Research has shown that exposing children to books and reading in their pre-school years assists in the development of emergent literacy skills (the ability to identify and manipulate sounds), the building blocks that are needed to help children learn to read later in life. Let's Read seeks to address research that has found that children who have not developed emergent literacy skills by school age are unlikely to catch up with their peers.

"This is an exciting opportunity for Corio," said Best Start Facilitator, Leonie Dillon. "Our children are the first in the country to access the program and will be part of a new generation who will be better placed to learn to read when they reach school."

Chief Executive of Geelong Regional Library Corporation, Dr Peter Mansfield, said the library, as with all public libraries in the Geelong region, will continue to provide an important link for families in the community to have fun with reading. "We encourage families from the area to browse our huge range of children's books and to bring their pre-schoolers to our free weekly Storytime," Dr Mansfield said.

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Let's Read is an early childhood literacy initiative of the Centre for Community Child Health (a key research centre of the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute) in partnership with The Smith Family. Let's Read aims to improve and measure literacy outcomes in Australia by encouraging parents to read to pre-school-aged children (0-5 years). Let's Read is designed to be delivered to families by community-based professionals using research-based, emergent literacy techniques and resources.

Let's Read gratefully acknowledges the support of Shell in Australia, The Telstra Foundation, Disney Hand, John T. Reid Charitable Trusts, and the Australian Research Council.

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