

Parents urged to read with babies and toddlers

Australian parents will be encouraged to read aloud to their babies and toddlers from as young as four months through a new early literacy program called Let's Read, launched during National Literacy and Numeracy Week - 29 August to 4 September.

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 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.

Appropriate book selection and reading technique are important factors in ensuring children develop emergent literacy skills (the ability to identify and manipulate sounds), the building blocks that are needed to help children learn to read when they reach school. Let's Read seeks to address research that has found children who have not developed emergent literacy skills by school age are unlikely to catch up with their peers.

Let's Read stresses the importance of having fun with books and making reading together a special time to bond with children. Tips include:

- Start young and read aloud to your baby
- Make reading part of your daily routine
- Have fun with silly voices and sounds as you read
- Turn off the TV or radio – your child likes to hear your voice
- Look for books with rhyme and repetition
- Read the same book over again, children like familiarity
- Let your child choose the book

More information is available on the Let's Read web site at www.letsread.com.au.

Let's Read will be gradually rolled-out nationally to families through community-based professionals, including community child-health nurses, child care staff and general practitioners, who will receive emergent literacy training and resources as part of the initiative.

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Notes to editor:

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.

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