



Early Literacy program for Illawarra's babies and toddlers.

Date: Wednesday 10 September, 2008

The Illawarra community introduces new literacy program for babies, toddlers and pre schoolers.

On Thursday 11 September, Farmborough Road and Albion Park Rail 'Schools as Community Centres' will be introducing a new early childhood literacy program, Let's Read, that encourages parents to read aloud to their children from as young as four months.

A joint initiative of the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute's Centre for Community Child Health and The Smith Family, Let's Read aims to give families the information and tools they need to introduce their children to books from a very young age in a bid to improve Australia's literacy levels.

Let's Read will be coordinated in Illawarra by the Schools as Community Centres. Community-based professionals including Family Support Workers and Play Group Coordinators will provide local families with special Let's Read resources including tips and information on how to read to babies and toddlers, a suggested book list, a DVD demonstrating ways to read and have fun with books and an age appropriate book. The resources will be made available to families free of charge, thanks to Families NSW funding.

Exposing children to books and reading in their pre-school years is thought to assist 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.

"Let's Read is a unique opportunity for Illawarra to promote reading aloud to children and make a real investment in their future," said Stefanie Hasleton, local facilitator with Families at Farmborough School Community Centre. "It has taken a lot of planning and hard work to get to this stage and we're thrilled to see it all come to fruition. Our children will have the chance to be part of a new generation who are better placed to learn to read when they reach school."

Event Details:

WHAT: Launch of Illawarra *Let's Read* Initiative

WHERE: Level 9 Function Room
Wollongong City Council

WHEN: 10am, Thursday 11 September

-ends-



everyone's family



***Notes to editor:**

ABS figures show that literacy is a national issue with almost half of Australians aged between 15 and 74 years (7 million) identified as either 'very poor' or 'poor' basic literacy skills, experiencing considerable difficulties in using and locating many of the printed materials encountered during daily life.

According to international research, children who have not developed emergent literacy skills (like the ability to identify and manipulate sounds) by school age are unlikely to catch up with their peers and face the prospect of limited educational achievement and poor opportunities later in life

About *Let's Read*

Let's Read is an initiative of the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute's Centre for Community Child Health. It is being developed and implemented across Australia in partnership with The Smith Family. *Let's Read* aims to improve literacy outcomes in Australia by encouraging parents to read to pre-school aged children. *Let's Read* is designed to be a sustainable, community-based program that is delivered by early childhood professionals using research-based literacy techniques and resources. More details about *Let's Read* can be found on www.letsread.com.au.

Let's Read gratefully acknowledges the support of Shell Companies in Australia, the inaugural corporate supporter.

For further media information please contact Deanna Brown, The Smith Family.
Ph: 02 9085 7276 or email deanna.brown@thesmithfamily.com.au

**Families at Farmborough
School Community Centre**
A Schools as Community Centres Project



**Albion Park Rail
Schools as Community Centres**

