

Love of reading spreads

By Emma Kelly

A NEW literacy program to encourage parents to read with their children from the first chapter of their lives has started in Tuggeranong.

Let's Read has been implemented at the region's Child and Family Centre to foster a love of books from birth to develop literacy building blocks before school starts.

The initiative caters for newborns through to five year olds and is designed to help children learn to name letters and play with sounds with their parents.

Let's Read was developed by the Royal Children's Hospital's Centre for Community Child Health and is delivered across Australia via a partnership between the Smith Family, the Murdoch Children's Research Institute and the federal government.

It will be delivered through Tuggeranong's Child and Family Centre thanks to a partnership between The Smith Family and Communities@Work.

The Smith Family program co-ordinator Sally Duncan said Let's Read complemented existing programs at the centre and would provide families with personal, one-on-one support.

She said 250 book packs had been developed to cater for different age ranges, while current funding should cover the next financial year depending on the number of families involved.

"Because we offer the resources as well, it's simple, it's easy and it's hands-on," she said.

"It's giving parents the confidence to be a positive role model for their children."

Ms Duncan said The Smith Family had developed a steering committee with Communities@Work, who would help deliver the program.

"They do a similar program. At the moment they will deliver the program to those families and to families who participate here at the Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre," she said.

"It's just worked out really well and the partnership has been great. I think we'll be able to deliver it quite successfully and hopefully, in the future, get more funding."



Sally Duncan reading with her daughter Evie McKendry as part of a new literacy programme designed to introduce toddlers to a love of language and books that will remain all their lives.

As well as from providing a range of age-appropriate resources to cater for children's developing skills, books are available in languages other than English to cater for the community's diversity.

"A lot of the resources come in foreign languages and cover different cultures and backgrounds," Ms Duncan said.

"With our multicultural families who aren't able to read in English, it will still give them the opportunity to realise how important it is to read to their child and to have books in the house."

Minister for Education and Community

Services Joy Burch officially launched Let's Read at the centre on Wednesday, March 26.

She said learning to read at a young age was integral to a child's future.

"Learning how to read is such a basic, fundamental skill that opens up all those other doors and opportunities for education – it's just critical," she said.

"We as a government can't do it alone. That's why partnerships with groups such as Communities@Work and The Smith Family are so critical, because it's a shared responsibility."