



ALIA LAUNCHES EARLY LITERACY FRAMEWORK

ALIA has launched a framework and strategy for public libraries seeking to support early childhood literacy.

Families have always been frequent users of public library services, participating in programs for babies, toddlers and young children such as storytelling and singing and borrowing from across their collections to share books, music and more with their children.

There are many professionals and organisations supporting early childhood literacy but only public libraries offer year-round free access to resources supporting reading and literacy, and they are among the few government-funded agencies helping parents to be their children's first teachers.

The new Early Literacy Framework and Strategy for Australian Public Libraries is intended to help define the special role of public libraries in early literacy and raise the profile of the important role public libraries play in pre-school learning, both with staff in the library, and externally with the public, government and funding bodies.

The strategy has also been developed to support efforts to gain formal recognition from government and other agencies providing early childhood support and services, with the aim of gaining the inclusion of public library representation in high level state, territory and local government planning for pre-school children.

The framework positions public libraries as 'active connectors' in early literacy, using existing and developing partnerships with organisations engaged in formal and informal learning, networking and training, supporting the creation of library programs and events designed to provide opportunities for parents or caregivers and children to share books together, and recognising and improving the skills of all library staff in supporting literacy. An important element of this is the support, in both time and resources, given to developing and delivering professional development opportunities for staff across the library, as well as sharing that expertise with other agencies.

The strategy includes a baseline for services and activities for all public libraries and a list of optimum level best practice activities.

The strategy and framework have been developed by the ALIA Public Libraries Advisory Committee (PLAC), which comprises representatives from the state-based public library associations, territory libraries, LINC Tasmania and Public Libraries Australia. These groups and their networks span all 1500 public library locations across Australia.

PLAC hopes to see the framework and strategy adopted by all Australian public libraries. Successful widespread adoption will enable benchmarking of libraries against others serving similar communities and enable ALIA to profile libraries achieving success in this area. It is hoped ongoing evaluation will reflect an increasing number of libraries specifying and including early literacy in their strategic plans and encourage academic research, for example into the impact of school readiness.

Full details of the framework and strategy are available on the ALIA website www.alia.org.au/earlyliteracyframework

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