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URGENT PUSH FOR EARLY LITERACY

The Australian National Early Literacy Summit will take place in Canberra on 7–8 March 2016. The event, organised by ALIA's Australian Public Library Alliance, in partnership with National and State Libraries Australasia and Early Childhood Australia, will feature leading experts on early childhood development; leading practitioners in education, libraries and pre-school; and organisations working with some of the most vulnerable families in our communities.

We intend for this event to be a game-changer in terms of collaboration and cooperation between agencies working in the field. We will not only be sharing the very latest thinking around early literacy and how we can use this to break the cycle of disadvantage, but we will also discuss the foundations of a national agenda to ensure that early literacy occupies its rightful place as one of our nation's highest priorities.


The opportunities provided by the excellent local and state-based early literacy programs already being delivered around Australia form the basis for conversations at the Summit, but we still have a long way to go.

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) in 2012 (goo.gl/NvcyPj) found that nearly one in five children aged five years in Australia was developmentally vulnerable or at risk of not developing the basic literacy skills they need to be able to read and write as an adult.

While much has been achieved at state, territory and local level, the closest we have to an Australian government-endorsed national agenda for early literacy is the Council of Australian Governments' 2009 Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (goo.gl/C1HPMZ).

By contrast, through its National Literacy Trust, the UK has the Vision for Literacy 2025 (goo.gl/zLJgQP) and an All-Party Parliamentary Group on Literacy (goo.gl/0qnt4g). And in 2014, there was a White House Summit on Early Childhood Education, hosted by President Obama (goo.gl/MIOdsj), at which Invest in US was launched as a public-private partnership to support better education outcomes for early years.

With a federal election ahead of us in 2016, we are hoping to encourage the main Australian political parties to include early childhood education and literacy in their policy platforms. So the aim of the National Early Literacy Summit is to spark debate about what a national early literacy strategy for Australia might include and how it would help deliver the best results.

If you are interested in supporting the best literacy outcomes for very young Australians, please join us in Canberra in March (goo.gl/f1uoVY). 

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