

# COMMUNITIES FOR CHILDREN: LANGUAGE AND LITERACY



## Early Years Literacy and Language Development Strategy – 2015

*Developed in consultation with over 15 organisations across Bendigo, including local government, early years, education and health service providers.*

### Our vision:

- Every child in Bendigo has rich, nurturing language opportunities
- Children’s language (development) is everyone’s business

The Early Years Literacy and Language Development Strategy aims to improve literacy and language development for 0-5 year olds across Bendigo from all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

***“A lack of strong early literacy and language skills in children has been linked to poor socio-economic wellbeing and health outcomes into adulthood”.***

The issue of poor literacy levels and language skills amongst children in parts of Bendigo has been of great concern to the Communities for Children-Bendigo initiative. When children don’t develop strong literacy and language skills in their early years, the negative impacts on future educational attainment, employment outcomes, socio-economic wellbeing and health outcomes into adulthood are significant. This, consequently, impacts negatively on the social and economic strength of communities over the longer term.

The 2015 - Bendigo Early Years Literacy and Language Development Strategy has been developed as an action plan to address this early years issue. The Strategy targets community efforts in a coordinated and focused response to poor literacy and language levels in parts of Bendigo.

### Key priorities to improve early literacy and language skills:

- Engagement of families in early literacy support and services
- Building parenting confidence and skills
- Increased community awareness and commitment to improving children’s literacy levels
- Stronger links and promotion of early years services and programs

Early Years Literacy and Language Development Strategy Document available at:



Goldfields  
Library  
Corporation

St Luke’s Anglicare [www.stlukes.org.au](http://www.stlukes.org.au)  
Goldfields Library <http://www.ncgrl.vic.gov.au/C4C-early-years-literacy>  
Bendigo Health <http://www.bendigohealth.org.au/>





Our key early literacy message.

*Read, sing, talk and play with your child everyday.*

## **BENDIGO'S EARLY LITERACY DATA**

The City of Greater Bendigo's -State of Bendigo's Children report (2013) reveals that Bendigo's children rate lower than the Victorian average on a number of developmental indicators including their language, cognitive skills, communication and general knowledge (by age 6).

Since the first report in 2011 there has also been a decrease in the reading standards of children in years 3 and 5. Within Greater Bendigo, there are certain suburbs (generally those with a higher level of socio-economic disadvantage) where children have literacy and language skills that are significantly lower than the Victorian or Greater Bendigo average.

## **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ACTING EARLY?**

*Literacy is a key skill for life.*

*It assists communication across a range of modes -  
print, digital and face-to-face.*

*This includes talking, listening, viewing, reading and writing.*

Benefits of enhancing early literacy and language development include:

- Establishing early habits for learning and assisting early brain development
- Increased self esteem for children
- Stronger attachments and relationships with families and carers
- Improved school readiness and performance
- Improved life opportunities- work, health and social
- Increased social and economic benefits to communities



*Bendigo Book Boxes-  
Little Libraries Program*

## **WHAT DOES A 'WHOLE-OF-COMMUNITY RESPONSE' LOOK LIKE?**



**Community campaign** and involvement to raise awareness of and celebrate early literacy.

**Early Years Website** - provision of information and resources to families, community members and professionals.

**Education programs** - through universal and targeted support for families, including HIPPIY, Mother Goose, Goldfields Library- Rhyme Time and Story Time, Talking Matters Speech Pathology drop in clinics and 'Let's Read' programs.

**Increased access to books for children** - through Imagination Library, Books for Babies, Book Boxes-Little Libraries, Book Cubby programs, etc.