

## What is Paint The Town REaD?

Paint the Town REaD (PTTR) is an Early Literacy Community Capacity Building Programme. This was developed in Parkes and then western NSW over 10 years ago, led by Rhonda Brain then Principal of Parkes Public School and has now spread to Western Sydney. In Parkes, since the instigation of the program, there has been a significant increase in the number of children commencing school ready to read and write.

PTTR encourages the whole community to support the development of children's early literacy skills from birth, so they will be ready for reading and writing at school. This mainly occurs through talking, singing, reading, rhyming and drawing with children from birth. This solid foundation is critical for the acquisition of literacy skills at school, which in turn is pivotal for employment and adult life successes. Research shows if a child enters school without these skills, the literacy gap between them and normally developing children is likely to widen not narrow, regardless of the excellence of the schools' teaching skills.

Features of Paint the Town REaD include:

1) **Annual Reading Day.**

Local shop owners and other community leaders read with young children in the shops. Participants pool resources and personnel. This allows for total community ownership: from the Chamber of Commerce, Local Government, Emergency Services to community NGOs, providing great opportunities for new and collaborative partnerships, strength based creativity and shared/low cost/no cost opportunities.

2) **Thinking smarter about existing opportunities to include early literacy throughout the rest of the year.**

Here organisations can look at their everyday activities and creatively use them to include or enhance early literacy activities. This does not require much additional time, and usually no additional dollars, as the existing budget is simply redirected. eg where once an organisation provided face painting at a community event, they may now have a Reading Tent instead. The monies that would have been used to purchase face painting materials are used instead to buy resources for book making.

### Who is involved with Paint the Town REaD?

In Parkes Paint the Town REaD was initiated by local school principals, but was quickly embraced by the Parkes Shire Council as a whole of community project. It has also been financially supported by State Government grants, but most importantly by local community businesses, services and individuals.

In Western Sydney, a model has been developed that seeks to translate the regional Parkes success into an urban multicultural setting. Local Councils are invited to partner with a local NGO to head a collaborative working party comprising local residents, child and family service providers, businesses and government services across the Local Government Area (LGA). The model has been established in the Blue Mountains, Auburn, Holroyd, Blacktown, Parramatta and Penrith Local Government Areas and is in its early stages in The Hills and Hawkesbury LGAs.

The model has the support of the Families NSW strategy in Western Sydney, through the provision of a Communities and Early Years Division - Community Services staff member to assist with the establishment of the LGA working parties.

### Want to know more?

Website: <http://paintthetownread.info> Twitter: <http://twitter.com/#!/painttownread>  
Members Networking: [www.paintnswread.ning.com](http://www.paintnswread.ning.com)

# Paint the Town REaD In Western Sydney

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