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Painting the town REaD

In a fast paced world, one program is encouraging parents to take the time to read and interact with their children to help boost their literacy skills.

Paint the Town REaD is a community partnership between South Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD), local councils and other local organisations which helps build early literacy skills in children.

Julie-Anne Murphy, SWSLHD Parenting Coordinator, Peri Natal and Infant Mental Health Services, coordinates the Paint the Town REaD program within the Local Health District.

As part of the project, Ms Murphy collects donated books, boxes them up in red crates and distributes them to health facilities, for children and parents to enjoy.

“Paint the Town REaD is an early literacy community program that encourages the whole community to read, talk, sing and rhyme with children from birth, so they will be ready for reading and writing at school,” Ms Murphy said.

“It’s very important that we give parents every opportunity to help their child get off to the best start possible,” Ms Murphy said.

“One of the ways we do this is by encouraging parents to make the most of the time they have with their children. We deliver red boxes full of books to emergency departments, children’s wards, dental health, eye clinics and mental health outpatient units.

“Research shows that the early literacy skills developed before starting school are important for attaining competency in reading and writing at school.

“Time spent reading and interacting with children also benefits parents. This time together promotes bonding and helps build their relationship laying the groundwork for children’s later social, communication and interpersonal skills.

“The program’s books were initially provided by local libraries and the program is now sustained through book donations.

“It doesn’t matter if the books are lost or damaged, or find their way into a child’s home.

“It’s really just about helping parents to connect with their children and helping children gain the skills they need to be ready for school,” she said.

If you’d like to donate books or you’d like a red book box delivered to your organisation, for parents and children to enjoy, contact Julie-Anne Murphy on 96164229 or julie-anne.murphy@sswahs.nsw.gov.au.