



PAINT THE TOWN REaD

10th National Conference 2026 – Workshop Descriptions

17–18 September 2026 • Camden Civic Centre • 31 John Street, Camden NSW

THURSDAY 17 SEPTEMBER | DAY 1

TIME	PROGRAM
8:15 am	Registration Opens
9:30 am	Welcome to Country & Housekeeping
10:00 – 11:00 am	Keynote – AEDC Mary Taiwo
11:00 – 11:15 am	Morning Tea
11:20 – 12:50 pm	Keynote – Interactive Music Presentation Domonic Lindsay – The Wiggles
12:50 – 1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 – 2:30 pm	Workshops
2:40 – 3:10 pm	Main Room 3 x 10min Workshops – Everybody attend • Reading is Magic – Andrea Folkard • Nelly Numbat – Jared Egerton – Warburton • Tell Me a Story – Neha Jain
3:15 – 3:30 pm	Afternoon Tea
3:30 – 4:30 pm	Workshops
4:30 pm	Mascot photo - Close Conference

WORKSHOP OPTIONS • 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm

Language Connections – Donna Bartley:

Every conversation shapes a child's future. Discover how the Language Connections Project is supporting eight early childhood services across the Shellharbour LGA to strengthen children's communication, language, and early literacy skills. Explore how educators are bringing learning to life using the evidence-based 3a Abecedarian Approach and engaging resources such as *The Colour Monster* by Anna Llenas to build language and emotional literacy. You'll leave with practical, ready-to-use strategies for creating language -rich environments that support children's learning, wellbeing, and connection.

Paint Dorset REaD: Building Reading communities in rural areas – Tanya Greenwood

This practical and informative workshop will be valuable for anyone who is looking to start an early literacy program in community or to strengthen the work they already do. Participants will get tips on how to understand the data in their community, develop a project outline, resources suggestions and activity ideas. There will be examples of our home learning kits to explore and templates for program design to take away.

Every Story Belongs Here – Neha Jain

When a child finds their own story in a book; their language, their family, their face, something extraordinary happens. They don't just become readers; they become believers in their own voice. This heart-centered session unpacks the powerful link between cultural identity and early literacy, and equips you with practical, joy-filled strategies for weaving First Nations storytelling, multilingual read-aloud, and family story-sharing into everyday practice. Come ready to audit, expand, and celebrate the stories on your shelves and in your community.



WORKSHOP OPTIONS • 3:30 – 4:30 pm

Where Stories Begin – The Magic of Imaginative Play in Early Years - Emily Bowden

At the heart of early literacy lies imagination. This engaging workshop explores **“Where Stories Begin: The Magic of Imaginative Play in the Early Years**” and celebrates the achievements of the Paint Playgroups REaD project in strengthening playful, language-rich communities across South Australia. Grounded in contemporary early childhood research and aligned with the vision of Paint the Town REaD, this session highlights how imaginative play builds the foundations for oral language, narrative competence, symbolic thinking and social connection, all essential precursors to reading and writing. Through real examples from recent Paint Playgroups REaD projects, participants will see how simple, intentional imaginative play experiences spark curiosity, expand vocabulary and nurture children’s confidence as communicators. Importantly, this workshop also explores the parallel impact of imaginative play on the adults in children’s lives. When parents, caregivers and playgroup facilitators enter shared pretend worlds, they strengthen attachment, model rich language and rediscover creativity alongside children. Playgroup facilitators leading these projects report increased family engagement, deeper relational trust and renewed professional joy as they witness the transformative power of imaginative play. Join us to reflect, reconnect and reimagine the powerful role of play in the early years, where stories begin long before children can read the words on a page.

Picture Books as Bridges – Belynda Smith

Picture books are foundational tools for supporting early literacy skills. This session invites participants to widen the lens, exploring how picture books can also support parents, relationships and wellbeing, and create the conditions in which early literacy thrives. Drawing on practice wisdom from the *Sunflower Group*, a preventative mental health, trauma-informed, child-centred parent–child program funded by Healthway and delivered by Meerilinga Parenting Service in Perth, this workshop demonstrates how shared reading experiences can act as a safe “third space” for families. Picture books help externalise big feelings, slow adults down, and open gentle conversations about children’s needs, without advice, judgement or pressure to “do it right”. The session situates this approach within contemporary understandings of child development and parenting support, highlighting the shift from behaviour-focused models towards relational, reflective practice. Participants will explore how picture book depictions of crying, laughter and play (as well as occurrences of big feelings in groups!) are opportunities for connection, and how attuned relationships form the foundation for language, learning and mental health. Participants will engage in a brief bibliotherapeutic story experience, pair and group discussions, and reflective moments that can be translated into libraries, playgroups, parenting programs and home environments.

Storytime in the Park: “bringing community together for the love of reading” – Sara Grant Smith and Jess Edgecomb

Learn to launch high-impact, low-cost community literacy events that connect families with local services. Based on the successful Paint the Farm REaD model, this practical session covers essential logistics, marketing, and data evaluation strategies. Participants will explore how this scalable framework enhances early literacy across different settings. Bring your creativity for a hands-on workshop to design your own book-based activity aligned with the core messages of read, talk, sing, rhyme, play, and create. You will leave with an actionable roadmap to showcase the wonder of reading across your unique community.

Talk • Read • Sing • Rhyme • Draw • Play

Proudly Supported by



entregar
partners





PAINT THE TOWN REaD

10th National Conference 2026 – Workshop Descriptions

17–18 September 2026 • Camden Civic Centre • 31 John Street, Camden NSW

FRIDAY 18 SEPTEMBER | DAY 2

TIME	PROGRAM
8:15 am	Registration opens
8:30 am	Housekeeping & Acknowledgement followed by First Nation Contemporary Dance Group
9:00 - 10:00 am	Keynote – Sheila Degotardi Fostering Early Language Development Through Everyday Interactions
10:00 – 10:25am	Morning Tea
10:30 – 11:30 am	Keynote – Antonia Goetz Baby Lab
11:30 am – 12:15 pm	Workshops
12:15 – 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 – 2:30 pm	Keynote workshop - Australian Institute of Family Studies – Jasmine MacDonald
2:30 – 2:45 pm	Afternoon Tea
2:50 – 3:50 pm	Workshops
3:50 – 4:30 pm	Conference Close Group Photo with Mascots

WORKSHOPS OPTIONS • 11:30 – 12:15 pm

Celebrating Literacy – Tracey Kirk – Downey Paint the Gong REaD

Building a culture of early literacy requires imagination, partnership, and purposeful planning. *Paint the GONG REaD* shows how creative collaboration can transform community engagement and elevate literacy outcomes for children and families. This presentation showcases the evolution of our vibrant local network and the approaches that have shaped our event-planning practice. Through strategic collaboration, we have embraced a “work smarter, not harder” philosophy—integrating our reading tent, mascot, and literacy-rich experiences into existing community celebrations such as NAIDOC Week. We will share our annual planning processes, tools, and proformas that streamline preparation while promoting consistency and accessibility. We will highlight how social stories, accessible promotional design, and thoughtful communication ensure all children and families can meaningfully participate. In addition, we will demonstrate how student placements bring fresh energy, creativity, and hands-on support. Above all, this session celebrates how fun, connection, and collaboration bring literacy to life. Participants will leave with practical ideas, adaptable templates, and renewed inspiration for designing early literacy events that resonate across diverse communities

Baby La La – BYU

The Baby La La program is a comprehensive five-week initiative designed to support the holistic development of babies aged 0-12months and their caregivers. Each week, the program features a unique theme, such as "Under the Sea," to create engaging and immersive experiences. Our structured sessions incorporate a variety of interactive activities that promote social interaction, cognitive development, and physical growth. Participants engage in group activities, sensory play, and movement exercises, fostering a nurturing and stimulating environment. The chosen music for the program spans a range of styles and genres, enhancing sensory experience and introducing babies to diverse sounds. The program aims to enhance the bonding experience between caregivers and babies, providing a foundation for healthy social, emotional, and physical development. Through guided play, music, and storytelling, Baby La La creates a supportive community that empowers caregivers with tools and strategies to facilitate their babies' growth and well-being.



Books 4 Bedtime – Andrea Folkard

In a time of declining reading for pleasure and increasing digital distraction, how do we reposition bedtime reading as a powerful Public health and education priority? *Books for Bedtime* is a research-informed initiative exploring whether consistent bedtime story routines can shift family perceptions about reading, from something “nice to do” to something essential for children’s development and later life success. Grounded in early brain development research, language acquisition theory and collective impact principles, this project examines how small, everyday literacy habits influence vocabulary growth, attachment, imagination and school readiness. This workshop shares emerging insights from current Master of Education research; alongside practical implementation strategies used in community and early years settings. It explores the intersection of family routine, cultural context, equity and access, asking what prevents some families from engaging in bedtime reading, and how communities can respond without judgement. Participants will consider how bedtime reading can be framed within policy, service systems and public messaging as a shared responsibility across health, education, libraries and community sectors. Practical tools for advocacy, messaging and implementation will be shared. If literacy is built in the everyday moments before sleep, then supporting bedtime reading is not optional, it is everyone’s business.

WORKSHOPS OPTIONS • 2:50 – 3:50 pm

Fostering the Connections between the Arts & Literacy– Mitchell Parker – Claire Rogerson – Alison Cameron

The arts play an essential role in supporting young children’s literacy learning. In this workshop, we invite educators to explore how children’s literature and arts processes come together through rich experiences with meaning-making, language, and creativity. Participants will take part in hands-on experiences to bridge research with practice through music and picture books as an art form. You’ll gain knowledge about practices and resources ready to design learning experiences in your program.

Grant Writing – Frere Mauger

Whether you are new to grants or looking to improve your success rate, this workshop will provide practical tools and insights to strengthen your applications. Learn how to identify the right opportunities, write with purpose, develop realistic budgets, and navigate the grant process from concept to acquittal.

The workshop topics will include:

- Optimise your opportunities – thinking outside the box
- The five W's
- The science of writing
- The importance of your budget
- The grant lifecycle
- Understanding the competitiveness of a grant system

Cushion Concert – Samantha Schoeler-Jones

Music is regarded as an international language, something every child should have access to, experience, see, feel, and connect with. Unfortunately, attending live concerts for many families is unviable, costly and for families with children with additional needs, can be stressful and overwhelming. Having collaborated for several years with Paint Liverpool REaD and GoGo Gecko, incorporating the message of “Talk, Sing, Read and Play with Your Child Every Day from Birth”, the “Cushion Concert” concept was developed. Funded by Mission Australia as part of the Communities for Children program in the postcode area 2168, the Cushion Concerts took place in 2024 and 2025 at two local libraries, Miller Central and Green Valley. During these interactive concerts, families were introduced to various flutes, accompanied by a piano, in a relaxed, inclusive setting. Children could sit, move around, dance or stretch out on the floor as they listened to a range of classical and popular music. Through these concerts, the Sing & Grow Registered Music Therapist was able to: - communicate the benefits of music for child development - collaborate with Mission Australia’s Southwest Sydney Family and Child Connections services - promote Paint Liverpool REaD message - encourage 2168 families to engage with community services such as their local library. This presentation will demonstrate how these special concerts connected families and services. Attendees will also be invited to experience some elements of the concerts.

GROUP PHOTO WITH PAINT THE TOWN REaD MASCOTS

Paint the Town REaD - Every child. Every day. Every community