LITERACY—language for life

For a chance to win a term of swimming lessons for your child at Reservoir Leisure Centre send us your “Once upon a walk” story (see page 5). Learn about the benefits of swimming for your child on page 8. Email your story to us at the address above.

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Please send us any questions/topics you would like covered in future editions.
The Parent Voice newsletter is produced by a voluntary editorial committee, including local parents and service providers, who meet quarterly in Darebin.
Join us! Contact Yvette via email yhiggins@darebin.vic.gov.au or ph: 8470 8120.
So what can I do to support my child’s language and literacy development?

Most of us take learning to talk for granted, yet we all know what a thrill it is when our child says their first word.

Babies come into this world as a blank canvas. Their loving parents coo, smile, talk, sing and read to them.

Babies enjoy this connection and will learn to reciprocate their parent’s smiles and coos. They are learning to understand the world around them: the names of the people, things and actions, the rhythm of our words, the sounds of our language and the social skills necessary to have successful relationships.

They are learning about why and when things happen and also that they can influence the people in their environment. It is these essential foundation skills that set children up for language success.

Young children acquire new words rapidly and learn to combine these words to form small sentences through their interactions with their parents and carers. Children’s language development, in particular their vocabulary, can be further advanced through their exposure to books.

Books provide almost unlimited possibilities for learning, not only about the world, but also about how to use language. It is also a great way for them to learn that spoken words can also be written.

Young children enjoy snuggling up with their parents to share the delights of a book. Young children love routines and predictability, which is why they often enjoy reading the same book multiple times. Constant repetition of the same story, gives children an intuitive feeling about the patterns and structure of language, and helps them to learn skills such as prediction.

Tips for parents

From birth:

• Make looking at books a regular part of each day.

• When reading to babies, be physically active. Incorporate actions as you read the book e.g. When reading Humpty Dumpty, pretend to fall with your child at the appropriate time. Your baby will learn to anticipate this.

• Use the library.

2 years and beyond:

• Vary when you share a book, read in a waiting room, on a bus or train, over lunch or whilst waiting in a shop.

• Listen to audio-stories.

• Use puppets or felt boards to tell the classic Fairytale stories.

• Tell “Toothy Tales”. As you brush your child’s teeth, tell each tooth a story about what adventures the tooth got up to or what was eaten. Not only will your child hear some great stories, but they will also allow you to brush all of their teeth!

• Make rhymes with your child’s name e.g. “Nicholas the Pickle-us, isn’t that ridiculous?”

• Make a photo “brag album” of your child doing different activities and with different
people who are important to them. Your child will love looking at photos of him/herself and it may encourage them to say simple sentences.

- Make up your own verbal stories using your child’s favourite character or theme e.g. Gary the Garbage Truck knocks over all the rubbish bins!

3-4 years and beyond:
- Point out written words in your environment e.g. STOP signs, EXIT signs, Pull / Push signs.
- Point out written words that start with the same letter as your child’s name, then move onto other words that start with family member’s letters.
- Talk about the letter’s sound e.g. “Your name starts with the letter H it makes a ‘huh’ sound, listen H-h-henry”.
- Talk about how some words are long e.g. hippopotamus and others are short e.g. cat.
- Talk about how rhyming words sound similar e.g. cat / mat. Point rhyming words out when you read together.
- Wordless-picture books are often a great way for children to make up a story about the pictures and can shift from the parent always being the “reader”.
- Encourage your child to talk about the pictures and comment on the story e.g. Oh oh! Why do you think that happened? What do you think is going to happen next?
- Ask grandparents to share a verbal story about when they were children.
- Get your child’s photo album out and talk about what happened on the day the photo was taken e.g. “Look here was your 3 year-old birthday cake just before I left the room and you climbed up on the table and picked all the sweets off!”
- Follow your child’s interests: If your child is into dinosaurs check out the library for a great range of non-fiction and fiction dinosaur-related books. If your child likes role-play, incorporate reading and writing into the game: pretend to be a waiter who writes down the order and reads the order to the chef.

If you are concerned about your child’s language skills consult your Maternal & Child Health Nurse or a Speech Pathologist.

Anna Crompton, Speech Therapist
Darebin Community Health

Wordless picture books

These titles and many more are available for loan through your local Darebin Library.

Jeannie Baker, Belonging
Jeannie Baker, Home
Jeannie Baker, Window
T.C. Bartlett, Tuba lessons
Raymond Briggs, The snowman
Donald Crews, Truck
Anna Cunningham and Barbara Vagnozzi, Stormy day and Snowy day
(2 stories in one book)
Anna Cunningham and Melanie Sharp, Bedtime and New School
(2 stories in one book)
Anna Cunningham and Trevor Dunton, Rocket ship and The Planet
(2 stories in one book)
Donna Diamond, The shadow
Paul Fleischman, Sidewalk circus
Deb Gilmartin, The gift
Domenica More Gordon, Archie
Tana Hoban, Black on white
Tana Hoban, White on black
Holly Hobbie, Gem
Stephen Michael King, Leaf
Barbara Lehman, Trainstop
Patrick McDonell, South
Mark Newgarden & Megan Montague Cash, Bow-wow bugs a bug
Jeff Newman, The boys
Jan Ormerod, Moonlight
Jan Ormerod, Sunshine
Jerry Pinkney, The lion and the mouse
Chris Raschka, A ball for Daisy
Beatrice Rodriguez, The treasure thief
Briony Stewart, The red wheelbarrow
Sylvia van Ommen, The surprise
David Wiesner, Flotsam
Tips & tools
to promote literacy

**Early Childhood Literacy Cards**

There are many useful free resources available online to help families develop early literacy in young children.

The following is a summary of one Early Childhood Literacy Card developed by the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations.

**Talking about TV helps children learn:**

Talking to children about what is on TV helps them to think, not just watch.

Some children join in, i.e. sing along with a singing show or dance along with a dance show. Such shows help to keep their minds active.

*The full set of Early Childhood Literacy Cards can be downloaded at: learningresources@deewr.gov.au*

"Read the stories that the kids love, over and over and over again"

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**10 read-aloud commandments**

*as suggested by children’s author Mem Fox*

1. Spend at least ten wildly happy minutes every single day reading aloud.

2. Read at least three stories a day: it may be the same story three times. Children need to hear a thousand stories before they can begin to learn to read.

3. Read aloud with animation. Listen to your own voice and don't be dull, or flat, or boring. Hang loose and be loud, have fun and laugh a lot.

4. Read with joy and enjoyment: real enjoyment for yourself and great joy for the listeners.

5. Read the stories that the kids love, over and over and over again, and always read in the same ‘tune’ for each book: i.e. with the same intonations on each page, each time.

6. Let children hear lots of language by talking to them constantly about the pictures, or anything else connected to the book; or sing any old song that you can remember; or say nursery rhymes in a bouncy way; or be noisy together doing clapping games.

7. Look for rhyme, rhythm or repetition in books for young children, and make sure the books are really short.

8. Play games with the things that you and the child can see on the page, such as letting kids finish rhymes, and finding the letters that start the child's name and yours, remembering that it's never work, it's always a fabulous game.

9. Never ever teach reading, or get tense around books.

10. Please read aloud every day, mums and dads, because you just love being with your child, not because it's the right thing to do.

www.memfox.net
Walking and talking

Walking is a great activity for the whole family. It can improve your health and save you money. The more walking you can do, the better!

Smart Steps: for Families has some great walking activity sheets. Download the activity sheets and enjoy walking with your family more often.

Once upon a time walk

Sharing stories is a wonderful way to spend time and entertain each other, and it can be done anywhere. This is a great way for children of different ages to have fun together.

Go for a walk and suggest to children that you make up a story together as you go. Everyone takes a turn with a sentence or two.

Start them off with “Once upon a time, two kids went walking with their mum/dad/friends...”, then encourage them to embellish the story.

They can incorporate things they observe along the way – maybe the funny house on the corner or the lollipop lady or man gets included.

Be as creative as you can as each walker takes a turn. It's a great chance for imaginations to grow and may have children begging for a longer walk next time.

For more great activity sheets please visit: www.victoriawalks.org.au/smartsteps/

I'm a working dad. I arrive home at bath time. After my baby’s bath we lay on the floor and I read to her, this is a great bonding time. Her books are mostly single word books, so I sing the words to a catchy tune.

From a Darebin Dad
Finding time

I was driving home from school the other day with my two children in the back seat. They were very quiet which made me suspicious. Looking in my rear view mirror I noticed they were both reading! They had taken their readers out and started reading in the car on the way home. And I had a thought, given that we are time poor... finding time for reading has become a creative exercise.

We try and read at bedtime nightly, but we have also read or told stories at bath time, dinner time and even as we are getting ready for school in the morning! And I have found that they really do not mind what time of day or night, they enjoy every story.

Rose, mother of two aged 6 & 8

Reading to/with your older child

My son is 10 years old and I am amazed at how much he enjoys reading and how big the books are. Some of his books are over 700 pages, no pictures and the text is quite small. He reads more than my husband does. Of course I take credit for this as I always had a love of books!

Looking back he always had an interest in books. We read to him from when he was a baby and continued to read to him daily. Bedtime is our special time, but as he has gotten older he has asked to read the sports pages of the newspaper to follow his football team.

He is also really interested in listening to stories of when I was a child and the things that my sisters and I got up to. He finds it pretty funny to think that mum used to be young and got into some mischief.

When an author visited his school and spoke to the students about writing books, he was so inspired that he came home and wrote his own action adventure book with chapters and illustrations.

So, I believe it is crucial to continue to read and share stories with your child, beyond prep.

Jodie, mother of one aged 10

Reading together

Reading is a great family activity which can be shared. It’s also a skill important at any and every age.

Even in year 8 my (14 year old) daughter was told she should continue reading every night as another way to help improve her writing skills.

Margaret, parent of 10 and 15 year old
Seed books
A seed book is a scrapbook with photos of things that interest your children or something they have done. It can be clippings from newspapers, tickets to concerts, footy games, entrance tickets to the zoo, a zoo map, song lyrics, a poem, a drawing of a character, a setting, a comic strip and/or a summary of their favourite book.

Children can build on these seed books and when they need to write a piece of writing, they can go back to their seed book and develop some writing from one of their ideas. They can use a photo of themselves doing something with their family as the stimulus to a narrative. They can give each family member fictional names and fictional powers.

From a Darebin Mum

Tips for developing literacy in preschoolers by Joanne, a local teacher and mother of three.

Don’t feel you need to teach reading, as that happens at school. Just enjoy developing an awareness of text, its uses and how it works. Reading should never seem a burden for you or your child. So make sure it’s always fun, and never a chore.

Modelling reading means letting kids see you read. Use it as an excuse to spend 10 minutes reading the paper each day, a novel or magazine. Reading for yourself in front of your children and don’t save your reading for bedtime... do it in the presence of your children. You don’t need to say a thing, just let the children see that reading is a great part of life.

When you’re out and about actively use, read and refer to street signs, food labels, price tags, name tags etc as these things foster an understanding of the concept of reading.

Cooking provides great opportunities to model the role of reading. Let kids see you read and refer to recipes as you cook together... point and talk about the recipe as you measure and mix.

Gluten-free choc chip cupcakes  Makes 18 cupcakes.

Ingredients:
125g unsalted butter, softened
1 cup caster sugar
4 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups almond meal
½ cup gluten-free plain flour
½ cup choc chips
½ cup (125mL) milk or buttermilk

Notes:
The almond meal makes these cupcakes yummy and wonderfully indulgent, even if you are not gluten free.
Top with the icing and a gluten-free teddy bear biscuit (or other gluten-free bikkie) and you can have an easy teddy bear party theme!

Method:
Preheat oven to 180°C. Place cupcake papers in two 12-hole cupcake trays.

In an electric mixer, beat butter for 2 minutes until pale in colour and creamy. Add sugar one third at a time, beating well between each addition.

Add the eggs one at a time, beating for about a minute between each addition; the mixture will be separate at this stage. Add the vanilla, almond meal, flour, choc chips and milk, stir until combined.

Fill cupcake papers ⅔ full (an ice cream scoop is perfect for this). Bake for about 15 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the middle of a cupcake comes out clean. Transfer to wire racks and allow to cool completely.

Recipe created by Melissa Hughes for www.kidspot.com.au

Play spaces in Darebin:
Construction on the new All Abilities Play Space at Edwardes Lake Park (off Griffith St, Reservoir) is expected to finish soon.

This wetland themed playspace caters to children of all abilities, aged from infant through to 12 years.

Come and visit Lizzy the Lizard and the gang and explore this brand new play space!

Other play spaces that are under construction and due to finish this Winter are:

- Leamington St Skate Park (Reservoir)
- Lahinch Playspace (Lahinch St, Preston East)
- AG Davis Reserve (Wood St, Preston East)
- Link Reserve (Link St, Kingsbury)
- Greenbelt Reserve (Greenbelt St, West Preston)
- JS Grey Reserve (Gilbert Rd x Regent St, Preston)
- Fido Park (Station St, Fairfield)

Play spaces focus on imaginative and natural play opportunities with unique pieces of equipment and seating in the shade!

Also check out our Top 5 Parks for children www.darebin.vic.gov.au
**What’s on**

**AUGUST**

**Saturday 17 August Book Sale. 10am to 3pm**
Find a bargain at a Darebin Libraries second hand book sale.
Prices range from $1 to $2. At Reservoir Scout Hall (Edwardes Lake Park), Leamington St (Melway Ref. Map 18 E4)

**Parent Education & Support:**

**Darebin Family Services**

**Darebin Harmony Group** - A multicultural group for parents and their children. Join other women and their children for fun activities such as cooking, jewellery making, stories, music, relaxation, health talks and more! On Thursdays 10:30am-12:30pm. A FREE 9 week program commencing 25 July 2013

At Northcote Town Hall, 185 High Street, Northcote
Phone Shuwei or Lisa on 9481 9520 if you would like to come (Interpreters provided if necessary)

Bookings for the following programs are essential, phone Anglicare Victoria Preston Office on 8470 9999 to register – ask for the Parentzone duty worker.

- **Parenting Fundamentals**
  A four week program for parents of children aged 0 - 6 years. This program aims to enhance parents’ understanding of child development and communication, strengthen family relationships and manage parenting stress. Times to be confirmed, contact Anglicare for details. At Anglicare Preston, 239 Murray Rd, Preston

- **Bringing up Great Kids**
  A six week program supporting parents to enhance communication with their children and to encourage the development of their children’s positive self-esteem. This program is aimed at parents of children aged 0 - 7 years. At Mernda Village Community Activity Centre on Wednesdays, 24 July to 21 August, 1.30pm to 3.30pm

**Local immunisation sessions**

**August sessions**

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Further information on immunisations and venues, please visit the Darebin Council website: [www.darebin.vic.gov.au](http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au)

Ph: 8470 8562
Email: immunise@darebin.vic.gov.au

Darebin has an Immunisation Nurse on-call for immunisation related medical enquiries only:
Ph: 0419 765 230
Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm

**The benefits of swimming**

A joint project between Griffith University, Kids Alive Swim Program and Swim Australia found that young children who participate in early years swimming achieve a wide range of skills earlier than the normal population.

These skills are those that help young children in the transition into formal learning contexts such as kindergarten or school. Significant differences between the swimming cohort and non swimmers were found regardless of socio economic background.

Physical milestones were achieved faster and the children also scored significantly better in visual motor skills such as cutting paper, colouring in and drawing lines and shapes, and many mathematically related tasks. Their oral expression was better, as well as their skills in general areas of literacy and numeracy.

Playgroup

Playgroup is an informal session where parents, grandparents, caregivers and children aged 0 to school age come together in a safe, relaxed environment, anywhere where groups of people can meet.

Playgroups are a low cost, effective way to introduce children to play and give them the opportunity to have fun, make friends and develop new skills through informal play.

Playgroup also gives parents the opportunity to meet other parents, make friends, have fun with their children and become familiar with their community.

smalltalk”

Giving your kids a great start

Have fun with your child and join a Smaltsalk playgroup today!

Darebin Council is offering Smalltalk Playgroups in your local community.

These groups are facilitated by qualified staff and are for children aged 1-3 years.

• Learn strategies to help your child’s learning and development
• Give your child a chance to play with other children
• Meet other parents and carers

To enrol or find out more phone Renee on 8470 8102 or email: Renee.Kesidis@darebin.vic.gov.au

The following ideas come from Playgroup Victoria’s A to Z Playsheets found at www.playgroup.org.au

Making books...

Children can explore literacy by making their own books.

Provide a range of materials so children can choose for themselves. Big or small photo albums, scrapbooks with stiff pages, photos, pictures cut out of magazines, autumn leaves, pressed flowers, crayons, pencils, textas, glues, tape and ribbons.

Babies will need you to make the books for them. Use simple, big pictures with bright colours. The pictures can be placed into a photo album.

Toddlers like sturdy books. Use smaller photo albums or a notebook with stiff pages. Add texture, use corrugated cardboard, fake fur, felt, satin or any material with a different texture.

Preschoolers are starting to appreciate the world around them. They enjoy books that they can relate to, about everyday things, pets, homes and families. Real photos can be used.

Make books with a theme, like dinosaurs, the supermarket or an event such as a birthday.

A space to enjoy books

Create a pleasant space in your playgroup or home for enjoying books.

Place books strategically on shelves with the covers facing out. Set up a comfortable soft area, in a quiet space with a chair, cushions, pillow pets and blankets.

Place a themed book next to a related activity i.e.

• transport books next to a train set
• animal books next to puppets
• a beach themed book next to a shell filled with sand.

Books are a child initiated learning experience, your child will choose the book they wish to explore. This plants the seed for an extension of learning through questions and sharing of oral stories.
Why read to your baby?

You may think that your baby is too young at the moment and won’t benefit from or understand anything you are reading to them now, but as Mem Fox comments in her book Reading magic: how your child can learn to read before school and other read-aloud miracles (2001):

Children’s brains begin to develop from the moment of birth. Babies are wired to the senses of touch, smell, sight and hearing whenever they are fed, played with, talked to, sung to and read to. The foundations of learning to read are set down from the moment a child first hears the sounds of people talking, the tunes of songs, and the rhythms and repetitions of rhymes and stories.

Reading aloud to your child is important and beneficial even though she/he is just a little baby. In her work “Babies need books” (1980), Dorothy Butler states:

A baby is learning about the way language arises from the page each time his parent opens a book, from earliest days. He/she is linking the human voice to the print at a very early age.

It is also a wonderful time to spend with your baby or child – sharing books together and watching them as they enjoy the stories and gradually develop a greater awareness of what they are seeing and hearing.

What sort of books should you read to your baby and young child?

• Books with large simple and colourful drawings, images with blocks of colour and black outlines – for example, Lucy Cousins and Dick Bruna.
• Board books are good for the very young, will withstand rough treatment and are easy to hold.
• Picture books with colourful imagery and dark large text that is repetitive and/or rhyming.
• Choose books that you want to read as well – you need to enjoy reading also.
• Other recommendations are number and colour books, alphabet books and nursery rhymes.

Some more great books to check out for extra information about children and reading:

• Mem Fox – Reading Magic: how your child can learn to read before school and other read-aloud miracles
• Jackie French – Rocket your child into reading
• Paul Jennings – The Reading Bug – and how you can help your child to catch it

Darebin Libraries not only has the items mentioned available for loan, but also runs a number of programs for children and parents.

• Pre-school storytime involves stories, songs, rhymes and activities for children up to school age (see facing page).

• Shake, Rattle and Rhyme is half an hour of rhymes, songs and actions for parents and babies – a very interactive session.

• Other languages Darebin Libraries has products available in Italian, Greek, Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic and Somali.

• Sponge Club is a special membership for children aged between 5 and 12 years old. Children receive a special card upon joining, along with a membership pack. Darebin Libraries runs special Sponge Club events throughout the year.

Children are also able to visit the Sponge Club website at www.spongeclub.com, where they can play games, find information about upcoming events and competitions, access online resources, discover lists of books on particular themes, find out about a selection of new products available at the library… so much to do!

If children are already members of the library and don’t have a Sponge Club card, they are more than welcome to come in and become a Sponge Club member!

Feel free to call the Library on 1300 655 355 for further information, or visit our website at: www.darebinlibraries.vic.gov.au

The Children’s and Teenage team members are also very happy to answer any queries you might have, and are thrilled to have new attendees at our programs.
Some wonderful books for young children:

- Janet & Allan Ahlberg, *Each peach, pear, plum*
- Jez Alborough, *Duck in the truck*
- Jez Alborough, *Washing line*
- Pamela Allen, *The pear in the pear tree*
- Giles Andreae, *Heaven’s having you*
- Anthony Browne, *My dad*
- Eric Carle, *The very hungry caterpillar*
- Lucy Cousins, *Maisy tidies up*
- Tania Cox and David Miller, *Snap went Chester!*
- Keith Faulkner, *The wide-mouthed frog*
- Isobel Finn, *The very lazy ladybird*
- Eric Hill, *Spot’s baby sister*
- Cheryl Hudson, *Hands can*
- Sam McBratney, *Guess how much I love you*
- Helen Oxenbury, *We're going on a bear hunt*
- Maurice Sendak, *Where the wild things are*
- Martin Waddell, *Owl babies*
- Martin Waddell, *The pig in the pond*

Pre school storytime

Darebin libraries offers free Pre School Storytime sessions each week during school terms.

These fun sessions introduce your child to books and libraries.

Through interactive storytelling and play, your child will access the exciting world of books and reading.

Pre School Storytime is suitable for children aged 2 years to 5 years, and sessions are held weekly at 10.30am (during school terms) for approx 45 minutes and involve a craft activity or creative play session.

They include:

- Story reading, using a wide range of books for children
- Rhymes and songs
- Simple craft activities

These activities are designed to:

- Develop language and motor skills
- Stimulate imagination and creativity
- Encourage socialisation with other children
- Develop an appreciation of books & reading in your child
- Provide children and their care-givers with a special time to share experiences

Fairfield Library Monday
Northcote Library Tuesday & Thursday
Preston Library Wednesday
Reservoir Library Friday

www.darebinlibraries.vic.gov.au

A very special Sponge club event took place across all the Darebin libraries in June. Activities were held to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Participating children enjoyed hearing dreamtime stories, and created stunning Dot Art paintings that were displayed in the Fairfield library during NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) week, 7 - 14th July.
Useful resources:

- **Raising Children Network**
  www.raisingchildren.net.au

- **Free downloadable literacy and numeracy cards**

- **Lets Read**
  Promotes reading with children
  www.letsread.com.au

- **Mem Fox**
  Teaching, learning, living!
  Ten read aloud commandments www.memfox.net

- **Kidspot**
  For great easy recipes for children

- **Victoria Walks**
  www.victoriawalks.org.au/smartsteps/families/activitysheets

- **Best Start**
  Download locally made books

- **Darebin Libraries**
  www.darebinlibraries.vic.gov.au

- **Reservoir Leisure Centre**
  www.reservoirleisurecentre.com.au

Educational Literacy Apps
- Eggy Words
- Endless ABC
- Rocket Speller
- Alligator Apps
- Sound letter links

Emergency Contacts:

- **Police, ambulance, fire 000**
- **Poisons Information Centre** Ph: 13 11 26 (24hrs)
- **Austin Hospital** Ph: 9496 5000
  145 Studley Rd, Heidelberg
- **Mercy Hospital for Women** Ph: 8458 4444
  163 Studley Rd, Heidelberg
- **The Northern Hospital**
  185 Cooper St, Epping Ph: 8405 8000
- **Nurse on Call** Ph: 1300 606 024
- **Maternal and Child Health Line**
  (24 hrs) Phone: 13 22 29
- **Breastfeeding Helpline** ph: 1800 mum 2 mum
- **Post and Antenatal Depression Association Inc**
  (PANDA) Support Helpline 1300 726 306
  Mon – Fri 9am – 7pm
- **Parentline** (24 hours) Ph: 132 289
- **Lifeline** Ph: 131 114
- **Women’s Domestic Violence Crisis Service** (24hrs)
  Ph: 1800 015 188 or 9322 3555
  www.wdvcs.org.au/
- **Darebin Volunteer & Information Support Services**
  Emergency relief programs
  285 High St, Preston Ph: 9480 8200
  Operating hours: Mon & Weds noon – 4pm
  and Fridays 10 – 3pm

Contact us: Yvette Higgins ph: 8470 8120
email: yhiggins@darebin.vic.gov.au

Hearing or speech impaired:
TTY dial 133 677
or Speak & Listen 1300 555 727 or
www.iprelay.com.au, then enter 03 8470 8888

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The volunteer editorial committee consists of parents who live or work within Darebin.
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