



Media release

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Paws for Reading comes to Selwyn

Local dogs and their owners are on an unexpected mission - working with Selwyn District Libraries to help children to improve their reading skills.

Paws for Reading is a new programme being launched in May. The programme is designed to provide an opportunity for children who are not confident reading aloud or who need to develop their reading skills to read to a friendly dog for fifteen minutes each week.

"We are excited about this new programme. Similar programmes overseas and in New Zealand have been shown to assist most children to improve their reading fluency and confidence," says Selwyn Libraries Manager Vicki Carlyon.

The dogs being used in the reading programme are carefully selected by the Selwyn Dog Training Club to be suitable to work with children. The dogs are supervised by their owners while children read and library staff are also present at sessions.

"Dogs make a great audience as they are happy to sit and listen to children, and for children who can be shy reading aloud they are ideal listeners as they don't interrupt," Ms Carlyon adds.

The sessions are being trialled during term two at all local libraries and are open to primary school children. Sessions are free but booking is required – to book a place please visit www.selwynlibraries.co.nz or contact your local library.

Selwyn District Libraries staff can offer advice to parents on encouraging and supporting their child to read.

"Encouraging children to choose their own books is a great idea. If children say they don't enjoy reading, helping them find books about things they are interested in like horses or planes or their hobbies can encourage them to spend time reading," Ms Carlyon says.

"As well as trying different reading topics different reading formats can appeal to children – for example some children don't enjoy fiction but will read non-fiction books while other children may be tempted to turn the pages of a comic or become absorbed in a book with multiple images."

"We have a huge range of books available in a variety of formats. The range of eMagazines, and eBooks is increasing for children who prefer using tablets or computers. Library staff are always happy to chat to parents and children about what we can offer," she adds.

Ends

Photo attached: *Stanley reads to Fergus on the Selwyn Mobile Library bus*

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