

# Early literacy and pet safety in a multicultural community.



# What are we going to talk about?

- Early literacy and pet safety in a multicultural community
- You already know why pet safety and awareness is important
- Our expertise – Early literacy and we in the library can be your partner to get the message out

# Blacktown

- Large population and growing:
  - Current population - 360,000
  - Anticipated population by 2025 – 500,000
- Our population is young
- Over half of our population are families with children

# Multicultural Blacktown

- We have people from 188 countries.
  - Top 5 countries of origin:
    - Philippines, India, New Zealand, Fiji and England
- There are 182 languages spoken.
  - Top 5 languages spoken:
    - Tagalog, Hindi, Punjabi, Arabic and Filipino

# Blacktown Animal Holding Facility

Blacktown City Council acts as a holding facility or pound for other Councils in the Sydney region, these Councils being:

- City of Canada Bay Council
- Cumberland Council
- Municipality of Hunters Hill
- Lane Cove Council
- Parramatta City Council
- City of Ryde
- Willoughby Council
  
- Within Blacktown:
  - 117,313 companion animals, which includes 90,000 pet dogs of varying breeds

## AHF Education programs aim to provide the community with the information that allows them to become responsible pet owners.

- Distribution of educational literature through EDM and print material
- Use of regular media promotions
- Community contact with Council Rangers,
- Free micro-chipping days, incorporating educational information
- Annual Pet Festival
- School Education programmes
- **Library Pet Storytime Program**
- The Pets on Line web page
- Rehoming partnerships



# Gap analysis

- 2013
  - Started going to schools; children 5 years +
    - Animal care and responsibility
    - Bite Prevention education
- Since then
  - 80 primary schools and community groups visited
  - Over 200 sessions held
  - Presented to over 4,000 students and 500 teachers/adults
- **What about pre-schoolers?**



# How to reach the at-risk group?

Carers and pre-school children who:

- Do not attend pet events
- Do not read articles in the local press
- Do not have pets

Multicultural audience who:

- Have a different experience with dogs in their countries
- Might not understand Australian laws

We want to:

- Build social cohesion – feeling safer in public areas
- Build animal safety awareness



# Finding a partner

- Look to council sections; who was already successful reaching this target audience
  - 16 Baby Rhyme Time sessions
  - 10 storytime sessions
  - **Each and every week**
  - average of 47 attendees (ranging from 8-100 depending on the location)
- Approached Blacktown City Libraries
  - Develop a Pet Storytime programme
  - To educate parents, grandparents, carers and children about how to interact safely with pets in public and home environments.

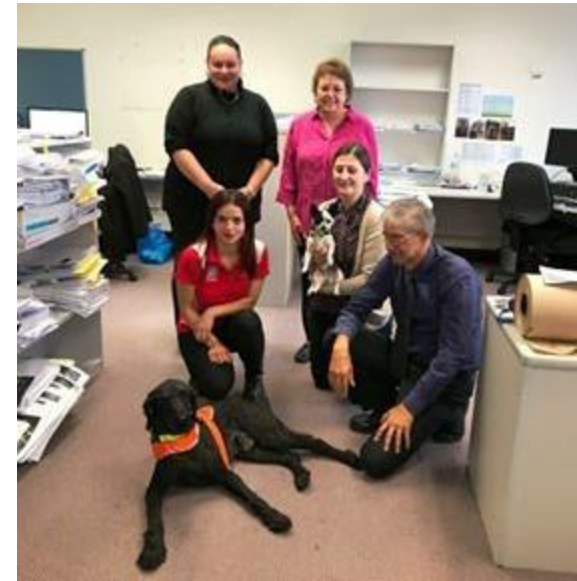


# Why Blacktown City Libraries

- 5 libraries;
  - Max Webber Library, Blacktown,
  - Our Library @ The Mount Druitt Hub,
  - Dennis Johnson Library, Stanhope Gardens,
  - Lalor Park Library and
  - Riverstone Library.
- In 2017-18:
  - 1.3 million people walked through our doors
  - Over 1 million loans
  - Over 1,500 events with 67,000 people attending
  - Most popular events; Baby Rhyme Time and Storytime
  - Currently have collections in 29 languages.

# Literacy programs using animals

- Reading to dog programs
  - Individual child reads to non judgemental dog
- Bring pets to work
- Library pets
- School holiday performances:  
Reptiles Alive / Featherdale  
Wildlife Wanderer, etc.



# What is in the program?

- Elements of the program:
  - singing
  - reading stories with audience participation
  - using props
  - live animal to deliver important information and
  - craft of Blackie to take home
  - AHF brochures supporting the important messages.
- Each element is kept to a few minutes
- We change the elements due to the attention span of very young children
- By demonstrating with the live dog we are addressing the needs of non-English speaking carers.

# Benefits for the library

- **Early Literacy Skills**

- Learn to use books (“Print Awareness”)
- Learn new words (“Vocabulary”)
- Hear sounds correctly (“Phonological Awareness”)
- Appreciate storytelling (“Narrative Skills”)
- Learn shapes and letters (“Letter Knowledge”)
- Love books (“Print Motivation”)
- Craft (Fine motor skills, creativity and imaginative development)

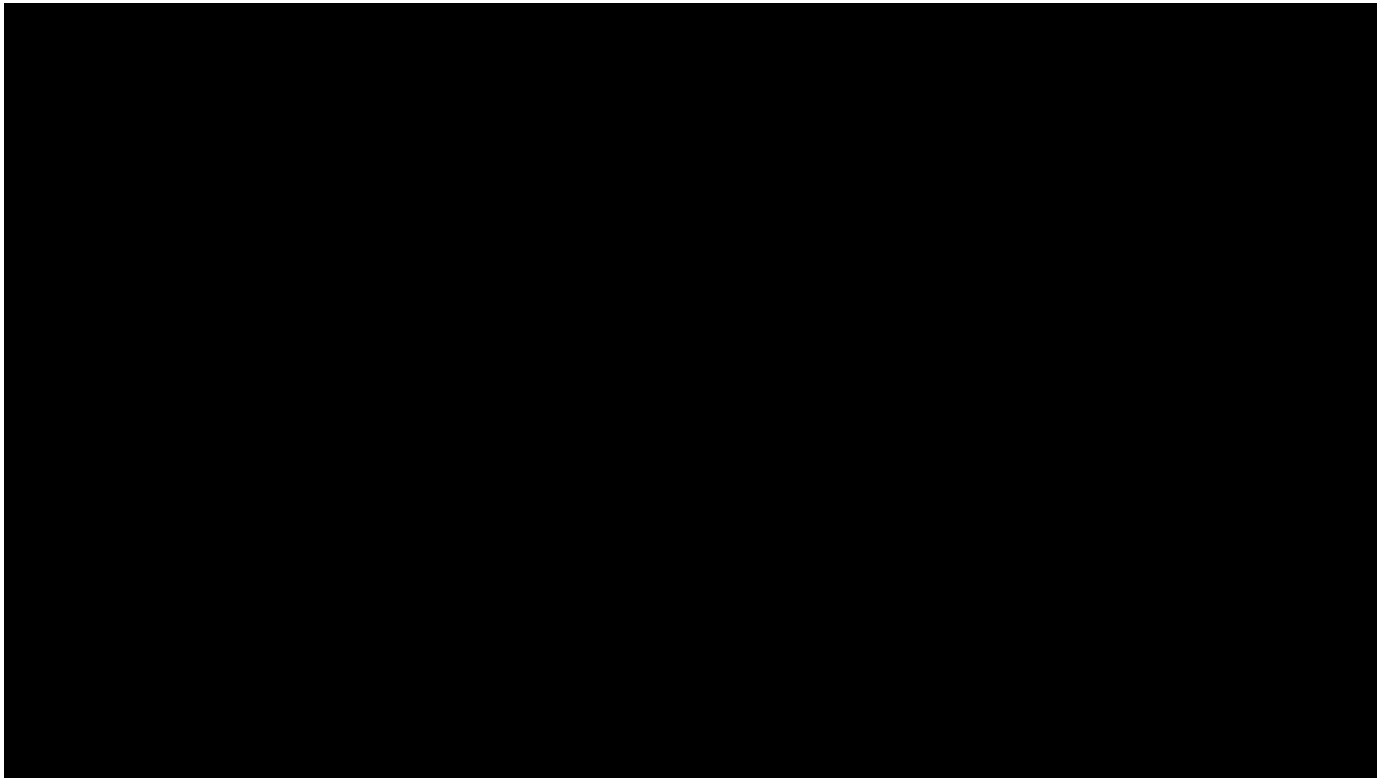
# Setting up the program?

- Risk management
- Resources
  - Storybooks (samples)
  - Songs: changing the words
- Training in storytime
- Training in animal management
- Scheduling, repeating and promotion



# What is the program?

- Showing the best bits



# Evaluation

- 19 sessions since October 2016
- Reaching an audience of 1,167 people.
- Presented a session and workshop at Paint the Town REaD Early Literacy Conference at Katoomba in May 2017.
- Visiting library students from University of Washington
- Feedback & comments

