

## **17247 - New submission from Early Years Strategy - Public Submissions**

My contribution to is urge that the strategy prioritises home literacy environments through addressing what is often out of reach for many families – to ensure all children have books in the home.

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL) is a highly successful established charity across the USA, UK, Canada, Ireland and in some states of Australia. More information can be found here:

<https://imaginationlibrary.com/about-us/#>

The DPIL scheme sees children receive one free book per month for the first five years of their life. Not only this, but each book comes with support resources for parents and carers. In some communities it is linked to Early Childhood Education and Care services, enabling educators to make connections when sharing books in care with the books children they know the children now have at home. To date over 200 000 000 free books have been given to children.

The literacy, early learning and social outcomes of exposure to books from birth are indisputable yet so many children face literacy poverty because of financial poverty, and this must be addressed.

The Early Years Strategy presents an incredible opportunity to ensure that no family should have to choose between feeding their children and reading to them. This is one simple, tried, and tested way the Federal government can enhance the home literacy environments of Australia's children.

I urge the EC Strategy to make DPIL or a similar book gifting scheme central to the Early Years Strategy so that early literacy skills can be enhanced and developed alongside the priorities of health, addressing poverty, early diagnoses and intervention etc. No family should have to choose between buying food to feed their children and buying a book to read to them – in that situation there is no choice at all.