

Australia Post improving literacy through reading and writing

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With first bells ringing across the country for a new school year, Australia Post is helping build the reading and writing skills of the next generation with the launch of the Pen Pal Club program, a storybook and a new partnership with the Indigenous Literacy Foundation.

The Pen Pal Club and accompanying school resources, aims to get primary school aged children excited about reading and connecting with others through letter writing.

The partnership with the Indigenous Literacy Foundation will see Australia Post send nearly 100,000 books to remote communities, helping children in remote Indigenous communities get better access to books and reading.

Australia Post's Head of Community Nicky Tracey said that at a time where public discussion often focused on the need to improve youth literacy, Australia Post was proud to be supporting real action on literacy.

"Through the Pen Pal Club children can experience the fun and excitement of getting something in the mail, and connecting with others, sometimes from different cultures and across great distances, while developing their reading and writing skills," Ms Tracey said.

"We piloted our online Pen Pal Club program with school teachers in September and over 5,300 classes have already registered, with almost 90% of these matched to start their exchanges."

The Pen Pal Club storybook, written by Sally Morgan and illustrated by Annie White, follows the journey of pen pals from diverse settings across Australia who exchange

handwritten letters with each other.

Designed to improve youth literacy, the book and associated school resources are supported by an online Pen Pal Club school exchange program. The program enables early learning, kindergarten and primary teachers to register their class to be connected with another class in Australia to start handwritten exchanges between students in different parts of the country.

Karen Williams, Executive Director of the Indigenous Literacy Foundation said: "In very remote Indigenous communities, children's books are scarce and literacy levels are significantly lower than anywhere else in Australia. Together Australia Post and the Indigenous Literacy Foundation will help ensure that children in remote Indigenous communities have better access to books and more opportunities to develop literacy skills."

Author of The Pen Pal Club storybook, Sally Morgan, said improving children's access to books, reading and literacy helps them develop essential life skills and broadens their horizons.

"Closing the literacy gap will provide children with more exciting opportunities and greater interpersonal skills and the Pen Pal Club provides a positive and engaging platform to help achieve this," Ms Morgan said.

The Pen Pal Club book, online Pen Pal Club school exchange and associated resources

are available free of charge for early learning centres, kindergartens and primary schools. Schools can register at auspost.com.au/penpalclub.

The storybook and Pen Pal Club letter writing kits are also available for purchase at

selected Post Offices around the country and online for \$9.99 each. \$1.00 from the sale of every book will be donated to the Indigenous Literacy Foundation to help provide books to remote communities.

Source: [Australia Post](https://www.australiapost.com.au/indigenous-literacy)

