

The HU4K Focus

Hands Up 4 Kids
LITERACY VOLUNTEERS



Newsletter 2/2025

Hello to all HU4K volunteers to our second newsletter for 2025.

A warm welcome to all our new volunteers. It is hard to believe we are nearly half way through the year. No doubt we are all keeping so busy making time fly.

Bunbury and regions hosted an informative Volunteer Networking Exchange (VNE) on 15th May with Susan Kokir talking about Dyslexia. A similar event is planned for Margaret River/Augusta/Busselton volunteers on the 7th of August in Margaret River.

Thank you to all our volunteers for your time and dedication. You really do make such a difference to the literacy of local children.

An African proverb simply sums it up "If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito"

Please enjoy the latest offering of *Hands Up 4 Kids Focus Newsletter*



Trevor Pengilly and Jan Akaczzonek (left)

HU4K statistician Trevor Pengilly at the recent VNE receiving a thank you from Jan, Regional Coordinator. Trevor does a marvellous behind the scenes job of collating our school and volunteer statistics. Thank you very much Trevor for all your hard work. See a "Did You Know" statistic courtesy of Trevor's hard work later in the newsletter.



Attendees at the Bunbury and regions Volunteer Networking Exchange at Hudson Rd Family Centre, May 2025

Volunteer Networking Exchange – Bunbury and regions - Dyslexia

In May Bunbury and regions HU4K volunteers attended an information session on Dyslexia presented by guest speaker Sue Kokir who is a DSF registered specialist teacher.

Sue provided a detailed presentation explaining the many facets of Dyslexia. Dyslexia, the term is now known as Specific Learning Disorder (in reading). It was informative to learn that Dyslexia or SLD is a neurological disorder rather than a visual one. The neurological pathways in people and children with SLD are not fully developed. This means that the alphabet letters appear as perhaps squiggles and the phonetic sounds are difficult to associate with a letter or group of letters.

Sue stressed the importance of phonetics in a child's reading that gives them the tools to **decode** what the letters are and the sounds they make. **Decoding** phonics is the key to helping children with SLD to learn to read.

One tip that was shared was to have a pointer or piece of paper (or just a finger) to put under a word allowing the child to focus on one word at a time. Well-spaced-out words with double spaced lines give the child a chance to focus on decoding one word at a time.

Sue gave a comprehensive explanation of SLD. More information is available online at : <https://auspeld.org.au>



If you would like, HU4K polo shirts are available to purchase from *PromoteYou!*

(Ph 9791 8195)

Colour Aqua and style JB's 210 Polo UPF 50+ (\$20+GST)*

OR if you have a polo shirt in the HU4K colour you can take it into *PromoteYou!* in Bunbury and they will embroider with HU4K logo (\$8+GST)*.

*prices correct at time of printing



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. In fact, it's the only thing that ever has.

M A R G A R E T M E A D



U4K Focus Newsletter invited Terri Knight, Volunteer and Zone Coordinator for Harvey and Yarloop PS to take part in our "Spotlight On" questions. Many thanks to Terri for participating with her well thought out responses.

How long have you been a HU4K volunteer? I started with HU4K as a volunteer and zone coordinator for Harvey and Yarloop PS in 2021.

What do you like most about being a volunteer? Volunteering supports small communities like mine by promoting engagement and collaboration. It motivates us to take initiative for the betterment of our community. I'm proud to be part of the Hands Up 4 Kids reading program and to work alongside the dedicated volunteers at Harvey and Yarloop Primary Schools.

Where did you grow up? I was born and grew up in Harvey. I left Harvey in my late teens, then came back to start a citrus farm with my husband and raise our children. I later volunteered at Harvey Primary School, the same school that I attended as a child.

What was your favourite childhood book? My very first book was *Sugglepot and Cuddlepie*, written by one of Australia's best-known authors, May Gibbs. May and her family settled in Harvey in 1885. Her books were based on her experiences walking through the bush and along the Harvey River.

What is your favourite comfort food? In the summer months there is nothing more enjoyable than catching, cooking, and eating yellowfin whiting on Binningup Beach. It's mandatory that the yellowfin is eaten with fresh, white buttered bread. In the winter months, a roast lamb dinner shared with family and friends is hard to beat. All year round a glass and a half of Cadbury's chocolate keeps my endorphins active and makes me happy.

What are you reading right now? I recently read *"The Women"* by Kristen Hannah and it's the novel that I have selected for my local book-club. It highlights the bravery of women who have risked their lives to help others. Currently, I am reading *"Nikulinsky Naturally – An Artist's Life"*. This exquisitely illustrated publication features the esteemed WA botanical artist, Philippa Nilulinsky.

If you were stranded on a desert island, what would you take with you? This question reminds me of my favourite movie *Cast Away*. Hopefully Tom Hank's loyal companion, Wilson will be there to comfort and advise me until my rescuers arrive.



Thanks to Trevor Pengilly, we can share some interesting HU4K statistics: Our volunteers donated just under **4000 hours** in the 2024 school year.

This equates to **\$100,000** if costed at \$25 per hour. On Volunteering WA's website, they calculate an hourly rate of \$40-37 per hour for volunteers over 65 years. This equates to **\$161,480-00**.

The biggest difference you have made is to each and every child you listen to read. Thank you to all HU4K volunteers.

Falling through the gap

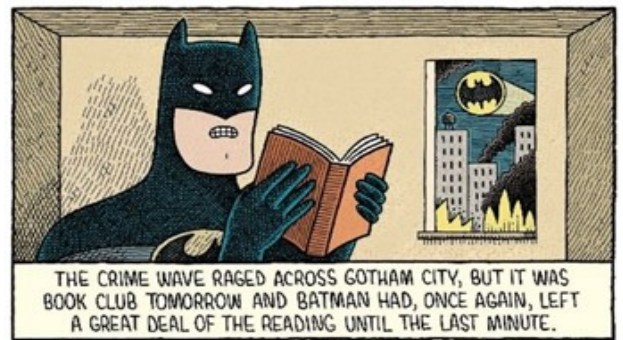
A recent article published in *The Australian* newspaper highlighted the story of a 28 year old woman with undiagnosed dyslexia. The woman revealed various ways how she would cover for her semiliterate state, such as forgetting glasses. The woman is a businessperson who said she left school feeling dumb, couldn't spell, and with a reading ability of a 5 year old. It is a heartbreaking story of someone who fell through the gap in education. Fortunately, this person was eventually diagnosed with dyslexia and sought help to improve her literacy. The article highlighted the importance of phonics, rather than the whole-word recognition, and the importance of phonics in helping children with dyslexia.

Ref: Bitu, Natasha, Education Editor, *The Australian*, April 5-6, 2025

Bibliosmia is the love of the smell of books. That's something an e-reader can't give you.

The evidence has become so overwhelming that social scientists now consider read-aloud time one of the most important indicators of a child's prospects in life.

— Meghan Cox Gurdon



TOM GAULD

Reading aloud to children

It is just as important to read aloud to children as it is for them to read to someone. This was the message in a recent article by Robyn Cox, Professor of Literacy Education at the University of Tasmania.

A UK report by publisher Harper Collins found that fewer than half of parents are reading to their children age 0-4 years. The report also found that some parents stop reading to their children once the child has learnt to read so they didn't inhibit their reading skills.

Professor Cox revealed research that shows there are two important skills involved when learning to read.

Constrained skills are the skills we learn like riding a bike, the alphabet for example, once learnt is not forgotten.

Unconstrained skills are the skills we learn throughout life, the building blocks of language and grammar, how words are formed and how we can build on those words.

In young children when we are reading to them, they are developing sounds of words and the alphabet. When we read to older children, they then develop the *unconstrained skills*. This introduces more complexity to ideas, words and sentence patterns.

What you read aloud to children is immaterial. It can be a magazine, manga, picture book or even share a novel together. The message was clear, keep reading aloud to children, even if a child is reading – there is in fact no cut off time when it comes to age.

Ref: Cox Robyn, University of Tasmania, May 9, 2025, <https://theconversation.com/why-its-important-to-read-aloud-to-your-kids-even-after-they-can-read-themselves>

Local Author

Harvey born author, Karys McEwan has a new book out called *The Paperbark Tree Committee*. It is a heartfelt story about growing up and leaving childhood behind; it's about family and being a good brother, fitting in and finding friends, and about making mistakes and learning from them. Readership: mid to upper primary.

Karys is a school librarian, bookseller, vice president of the Victorian branch of CBCA, and education advisor for the Melbourne Writers Festival. Karys is passionate about the role libraries and books can play in the wellbeing of young people. You can visit Karys website for more information: <https://www.karysmcewen.com>

Permission given by Text Publishing, May 2025 for image, bio, and synopsis.



Children who are read to learn two things: First, that reading is worthwhile, and second, that they are worthwhile.

Laura Bush

Fun Fact: *The disappearance of the semicolon*

In 1781, British literature featured a semicolon roughly every 90 words; by 2000, it had fallen to one every 205 words. Today, there is just one semicolon for every 390 words. Recent research reported that 67% of British students never or rarely use a semicolon; more than 50% did not know how to use it. The semicolon first appeared in 1494. The poet Lewis Thomas says "the semicolon gives you a little feeling of expectancy; there is more to come; read on; it will get clearer."