

**St John (NSW)**  
**Community Care**  
**PROGRAM TO AID LITERACY (PALs™)**  
**GENERAL INFORMATION**



**Background**

Community Care, St John (NSW), was established in 1989 to provide services to the community in areas other than First Aid. In response to needs identified in the community during the International Year of Literacy in 1990, the branch established its first project, the St John Program to Aid Literacy (PALs™).

**What is the Program to Aid Literacy?**

The Volunteer Program is designed to assist children in NSW primary schools with literacy. Trained volunteers are linked with children on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. The Program aims to improve children's reading and writing skills and to enhance their confidence and self-esteem.

**Where does the Program operate?**

The Program operates in primary schools across NSW. For example: Gosford, Newcastle, Sydney Metropolitan, Nowra, and Wollongong. Potentially any school in NSW can participate and indeed there are some schools in regional areas supported by the Program.



**How are volunteers recruited?**

Community Care recruits volunteers from the general community using a variety of methods including print and electronic media. Each school on the Program also recruits volunteers through school newsletters and parent meetings.

**Who are our volunteers?**



Our volunteers are adults from a variety of backgrounds and experience. They value literacy, are interested in children and have an hour per week to commit to the Program.

**What training is involved and who does it?**

Volunteers undertake a 16 hour Program to Aid Literacy Course (PALC), which is conducted by an accredited St John Trainer who is also a fully qualified teacher. The cost of the course is \$25; however, some courses may be reduced when funding is received. Training can also be completed by Flexible Learning Mode.

The PAL™ course is an accredited St John training course, and participants receive a certificate on completion. The course covers both theoretical and practical aspects of the reading process, as well as addressing values, attitudes and communication skills. All aspects of the course are in line with the English K-6 Syllabus.

The training course equips volunteers with a variety of strategies and activities that enable them to conduct a one hour session independently with a child. The PALC is based on an integrated approach to the acquisition of literacy skills through reading, writing, talking and listening.

#### **How are volunteers screened?**

Volunteers are screened by trainer appraisal during the course, referee checks and written and practical assessment tasks. They must also be willing to undergo a police check. St John retains the right to refuse an application without explanation.

#### **What does the PAL™ (volunteer) role involve?**

PALs™ support students in accordance with the school's literacy program. Some schools are especially keen for the PAL™ to utilise school resources while others are happy to let the PAL™ select his or her own material. Ideally the students referred to a PAL™ should have no diagnosed disorders or disabilities. The Program is flexible and PALs™ are encouraged to negotiate with the Program Coordinator at the school to ensure both PAL™ and school needs are met.

#### **What type of information does a PAL receive about a child?**

There is a Pupil Referral Form available to Program Coordinators which may be completed by the class teacher to give details about the child's or children's current literacy skills in the areas of reading, writing, talking and listening.

#### **How is a PAL™ matched to a school?**

In the training course, volunteers are given a list of participating schools from which they may choose. Alternatively, we can approach new schools at the volunteer's request. Once notified, the school confirms that they can accommodate a new volunteer and arranges an introductory meeting. The PAL negotiates a mutually convenient time in which to volunteer on a weekly basis. Students are selected for the volunteer by the school.

#### **What type of support does St John offer PALs, once they are working in schools?**

Two volunteer development meetings are held each year. These are organised by Community Care trainers, and consist of a training module in an area of literacy and a feedback session. Community Care staff in Burwood are also available to offer ongoing support and assistance.

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## PROGRAM TO AID LITERACY COURSE ENROLMENT FORM

Course  
Location and  
Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Mr Mrs Miss Ms \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Post  
Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you  
hear about  
the course? \_\_\_\_\_

Payment is enclosed. Payment is by: Cheque / Money Order/ or please debit \$25.00  
from my (*please tick*):

**MasterCard**    **Diners Club**    **Visa**    **Bankcard**    **American Express**

Name of cardholder:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_ / \_\_ / \_\_

Please return by post, fax or email:

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