



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Help Australian kids learn to read

With an OECD study revealing that Australian students are beginning to fall behind their counterparts overseas, it has never been a better time to help students learn to read.

St John (NSW) runs Early Literacy Courses for parents, grandparents or family friends who want to better their child's literacy skills or help teach children in their local community.

The OECD study, which examined the classroom performance of 400,000 15-year-old students in OECD nations between July and September this year, revealed that reading ability declined, with Australian students in sixth place for reading literacy levels, down from second in 2000 and third in 2003.

The St John course covers both the theoretical and practical aspects of the reading process as well as addressing values and attitudes and communication skills. It has been developed in consultation with the NSW Department of Education and Training K-6 English Syllabus.

People who complete the course receive a certificate, and are invited to join the St John (NSW) Program to Aid Literacy (PALs®), a volunteer program designed to help primary school students who have problems with reading and writing.

PALs® operates in primary schools across NSW, linking volunteers with a child who needs that extra bit of help with learning. Volunteers spend an hour a week during school time assisting children one on one or in small groups.

"Many PALs® volunteers have been participating in the program for a number of years and find it extremely rewarding to provide that extra help to a child learning to read and write," said Marcia Chalmers, Community Care Manager.

"The Early Literacy Course provides the skills for people who are interested in becoming a PALs® volunteer, as well as encouraging mums, dads and grandparents to help out their own young ones," she said.

For further details contact St John on 02 9219 6842 or visit [www.stjohnnsw.com.au](http://www.stjohnnsw.com.au).

**ENDS**

**For interviews and media enquiries:**

Bethany Hoskin

Communications Coordinator

St John (NSW)

T: 9219 6856

E: [bethany\\_hoskin@stjohnnsw.com.au](mailto:bethany_hoskin@stjohnnsw.com.au)