

# READY FOR SCHOOL

## support for vulnerable children in wake of poor NAPLAN results

Annabelle Cornish, Mosey Bolton and Michael Reading at the TSH Literacy program. Below: Teacher Shannon Rose.  
Pictures: Andrew Ritchie



## TWO HOURS OF LEARNING POWER

RHIANNA MITCHELL

Every week during the school term, small groups of primary school children gather at the Teach Speak Hear headquarters to engage in intensive literacy lessons.

Over time and at their own pace each child develops their skills and, more importantly, according to teacher Shannon Rose, discovers a love for reading and writing.

"Many parents have shared their excitement when their child begins to choose books on their own or shows pride in their reading and writing," Ms Rose said.

"We regularly hear that children are applying their new skills in their larger classroom, feeling proud of their achievements."

The two-hour sessions for students in Years 1 to 3 aim to develop skills in reading, spelling and writing through early intervention and explicit teaching.

The program has seen increased demand over the past 12

months, which Ms Rose attributed to the growing awareness around the importance of early literacy intervention.

Ms Rose said she was seeing common trends in children who struggled with literacy – including difficulties with phonemic awareness such as hearing, identifying and manipulating the sounds in words, and struggles with emotional regulation.

"(Other trends are) challenges with attention and focus, which can affect how well they stay engaged and follow multi-step instructions, and difficulty organising and expressing their thoughts in writing, even when they have good ideas," she said.

"A clear pattern is that these children benefit from a systematic, explicit, evidence-based program that breaks learning into small, manageable steps. "They also need regular review to move skills into long-term memory, supporting consistent growth and lasting confidence."



Ms Rose said early intervention gave children the best chance to close learning gaps before they widen.

"Classrooms are more complex than ever, teachers do an amazing job with stretched resources to cater for complex classrooms, and we call on the Government to step up support, in the early years but also across the board," he said.

"In a State as wealthy in WA, Western Australians shouldn't accept that one in three students aren't achieving those core base-

line proficiencies in reading, writing and numeracy."

He also called on the WA Government to release the findings of a review of the School Education Act, aimed at strengthening access, inclusion and services across the public system for students with a disability.

The review was completed in December and Ms Winton said

last month she was working through the details.

The 2025 NAPLAN results revealed location, family background and socio-economic status continue to be factors in students' scores.

Almost one-in-three Indigenous students was classified as needing extra support, compared with just under one-in-10 non-Indigenous students.

And just one-in-five students in very remote areas had results that were considered strong or exceeding expectations — far below the 70 per cent of students in major cities who achieved the same rankings.

Federal Education Minister Jason Clare said the national results showed encouraging signs but there was more work to do.

The \$16b, 10-year agreements signed with all States and Territories, which is tied to reforms, has started to roll out.

It will include phonics and numeracy checks in the first year of schooling. The WA Government is the only jurisdiction not to sign up to the numeracy checks, stating it already does out on-entry testing in pre-primary which includes numeracy.

## Appeal to jail taser cop fails

The family of an elderly woman are "struggling" to comprehend how the former police officer who fatally tasered her will not go to jail after a court found his sentence may have been "lenient" but was not "inadequate".

Then sen. const. Kristian White, 34, tasered 95-year-old Clare Nowland at a nursing home in Cooma, NSW, on May 17, 2023. White was found guilty of manslaughter in November, and given a two-year community

corrections order and community service. The Director of Public Prosecutions lost its bid for a harsher sentence when its appeal was dismissed on Wednesday morning.

"The Nowland family is struggling to come to terms with how ... a former police officer who was convicted of using deadly force on Clare ... can walk free without having spent a single day in jail," the family's statement read.

## Data shows stillbirths at record high

HANNAH CROSS

Stillbirths have reached a 20-year high with one baby stillborn every 3.5 hours in Australia, according to the latest figures from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Preliminary perinatal death data revealed there were 11 deaths per 1000 births in 2023, four in five of which were stillbirths. The stillbirth rate, 8.7 per 1000 births, was the highest

reported in more than two decades, according to the AIHW. The AIHW said it was in line with an upward trend seen in recent years, with several factors at play. Further research is ongoing nationwide.

Some contributing elements could include better data quality and an increase in the number of terminations after 20 weeks.

"Some pregnancies that ended by termination after 20 weeks gestation would have resulted in

a perinatal death had the pregnancy continued without medical intervention," the research said. The dataset also showed Australia's birth rate is continuing to decline at 52 per 1000 women, down from 66 per 1000 in 2007. It was similar in WA with a birth rate of 52 per 1000 in 2023.

AIHW spokesperson Louise Catanzariti said women are also choosing to have babies later in life. **Red Nose Grief and Loss Support Line 1300 308 307**