

## **Wilbur – A Multilingual Australian Picture Book for New Arrivals and Migrant Families. One Story – Fourteen Languages**

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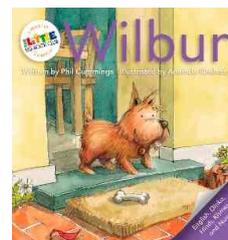


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**Abstract:** *Wilbur – A Multilingual Australian Picture Book for New Arrivals and Migrant Families One Story – Fourteen Languages*



**The Wilbur project** <http://www.thelittlebigbookclub.com.au/programs/wilbur-multilingual-video-audio-resources>

*The 'Wilbur' project is an exciting joint initiative from The Little Big Book Club (LBBC), the MyLanguage national public library partnership with leadership provided by the SA Public Library Network. The project has seen an existing LBBC multilingual picture book (Wilbur) transformed into multilingual video and audio files to support Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities throughout Australia.*

*The Wilbur project encourages children to embrace their cultural and linguistic heritage by providing bilingual reading resources in 13 different languages, including the English translation. The resource was developed as a key CALD program for the National Year of Reading 2012. The picture book, audio and video recordings are available online and can be shared free by children, parents, carers and educators. Wilbur has provided a highly visible CALD resource in the publishing arena, that supports multilingual children to keep their linguistic heritage.*

*Wilbur was produced to provide families that do not have English as a first language with the opportunity to share stories in their first language. As part of the project, 2,200 copies of the Wilbur Multilingual Book Readings on DVD and 1400 sets of the Wilbur Picture Books (4 books per set) have been distributed free of charge to all Australian Public Libraries and service providers thanks to the program partners.*

*We believe Wilbur is a great resource that enables children to observe family and community members reading in their mother tongue, which goes a long way towards supporting cultural and linguistic heritage our communities*

*The presentation will provide examples how libraries across the nation support linguistic and cultural heritage, social inclusion and early literacy.*

**Keywords:** *Wilbur*, bilingual, Public Libraries, MyLanguage, LBBC.

## INTRODUCTION

*It takes a village to raise a child...we believe it takes many partners to work collaboratively together to support the linguistic and cultural heritage of our children. We believe Wilbur is a great resource that enables children to observe family and community members reading in their mother tongue, which supports cultural and linguistic heritage in our communities.*

## THE CONTEXT – AN OVERVIEW OF ‘AUSTRALIA AT A GLANCE’

Australia’s population will reach 23 million in April 2013, the cultural and linguistic diversity of Australia’s resident population has been reshaped over many years by migration. Historically, more people immigrate to, than emigrate from, Australia. At 30 June 2011, 27% of the estimated resident population was born overseas (6.0 million people). This was an increase from ten years earlier at 23.1% (4.5 million people).

### CALD residents

Since October 1945, more than 7.2 million people have migrated to Australia— 750, 000 of these people arrived under the Humanitarian Program. Today 1 in 4 of Australia's population was born outside Australia. (ABS 3412.0)

## THE ‘WILBUR’ PROJECT

The ‘*Wilbur*’ project is an exciting joint initiative from The Little Big Book Club (LBBC), MyLanguage national public library partnership with leadership provided by the SA Public Library Network. The project has seen an existing LBBC multilingual picture book (*Wilbur*) transformed into multilingual video and audio files to support Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities.

In 2012 as a National Year of Reading project (NYR), The Little Big Book Club (LBBC) and MyLanguage partnership worked together to create a suite of digital *Wilbur* resources to support Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities participating in NYR Events. The main aim was to encourage and enable CALD families to read aloud to their children in their home language as well as English. Community organisations such as libraries were also encouraged to offer multilingual rhyme and story time sessions using the *Wilbur* multilingual picture book.

It is anticipated that collaborative projects such as this one will raise awareness of the importance of reading materials for young children and families in a variety of languages which support linguistic and cultural heritage. For MyLanguage it was the perfect vehicle to continue their work in the digital world, whilst supporting literacy and cultural and linguistic heritage.

**The *Wilbur* project:** <http://www.thelittlebigbookclub.com.au/programs/wilbur-multilingual-video-audio-resources>

The *Wilbur* project encourages children to embrace their cultural and linguistic heritage by providing bilingual reading resources in 13 different languages, including the English translation to promote learning of a second language. The resource was developed as a key CALD program for the National Year of Reading 2012. The picture book and audio and video recordings are available online and can be shared free by parents, carers and educators. *Wilbur* has provided a highly visible CALD resource in the publishing arena, that supports immigrant children to keep their linguistic and cultural heritage, whilst at the same time encouraging the use of English language.

## BACKGROUND

The last ten years have seen a growing interest in early literacy across many fields, and it is acknowledged that children develop emergent literacy skills which are transferable across languages, so whether parents read aloud in their familial language or in English, the benefits remain the same. Public libraries deliver very successful early literacy programs, which engage with a substantial percentage of Australian families; however, a deficit was identified as to how we engage with refugee

and migrant families and meet their needs, wants and support their cultural and linguistic heritage. In 2009, LBBC undertook extensive research and consultation with a wide cross section of industry professionals and new arrival families to assist in the development of resources to encourage parents to talk and participate in early language and literacy activities with their children in both English and their first language. *Wilbur* was specifically designed for the needs of migrant and refugee families with children aged five years and under. South Australian author Phil Cummings and Amanda Graham were commissioned as the author and illustrator for the *Wilbur* book, the book is unique format in that the structure includes multiple language per book

The objectives of *Wilbur* included:

- Understand the support required by migrant and refugee families to encourage and enable them to read aloud to their children.
- Develop a more cost effective approach to supplying books in various languages.
- Encourage parents to talk and participate in early language and literacy activities with their children in both English and their first language.
- Support cultural and linguistic heritage



In 2012 significant research and stakeholder consultation, which included working with CALD families, was undertaken in developing the concept of *Wilbur* in the digital world. Families volunteered their time to the project and a professional interpreting service was used to ensure that the languages featured in the *Wilbur* books and those spoken to camera were consistent and linguistically correct.

The 14 languages corresponding to the *Wilbur* multilingual picture books that have been made available to watch and listen to include:

Book 1: Somali / Tamil / Burmese / Farsi / English

Book 2: Dinka / Hindi/ Khmer / Nuer / English

Book 3: Amharic / Chinese / Arabic / Vietnamese / English

Book 4: Amharic / Chinese / Arabic / French / English

In particular, the videos promote story-telling behavior in a culturally sensitive way, showing families how easy and fun it can be to share books in their familial language.

The resources are available to watch and listen to on the Little Big Book Club and MyLanguage websites as well as YouTube. As part of the project, 2200 copies of the *Wilbur* Multilingual Book Readings on DVD and 1400 sets of the *Wilbur* Picture Books (4 books per set) have been distributed free of charge to all Australian Public Libraries and service providers thanks to the program partners.

Library staff are encouraged to promote these resources to their members, particularly if they are aware that the family attending the library may have English as a second language. The launch of the *Wilbur* suite of resources is a great conversation starter and a reminder to staff to think about the needs of CALD families in their community and how they can service them more effectively.

Many libraries work collaboratively with bilingual support services to offer Multilingual story time sessions, and cultural events which celebrate International Mother Language Day, Harmony Day etc. The presentation will provide an overview of programs, which showcase library programs that support linguistic and cultural heritage.

## **AN OVERVIEW OF OTHER LIBRARY PROGRAMS SUPPORTING CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC HERITAGE**

### ***Bilingual Story Times in the Community – Hume Libraries, Victoria***

Hume has a very diverse community with approximately 41% from a non-English speaking background, as well as being an area of significant social disadvantage. Bilingual story times first started in the Library as a response to CALD communities' need to maintain linguistic and cultural heritage, socialise with others and for parents and children to learn together. Working with families who have a CALD background can represent numerous challenges, not only operational and relational but on multiple intrinsic levels. The Hume City Council in collaboration with community development workers, and speech pathologists and library staff have worked together to develop and deliver bilingual story time.

Hume identified an emerging need to outreach to the community, bilingual storytellers started to visit playgroups, preschools, other early childhood services and women's groups to deliver the service and support cultural diversity. Storytellers from target communities encouraged community participation and therefore the program has witnessed continuous growth in attendance. The program has also widened participation further by encouraging volunteers to assist storytellers with story time sessions both in the library and offsite.

The storytellers in bilingual sessions not only act as instructors and entertainers, but also as trusted intermediaries, engaging with individual and groups with relevant health, safety and educative services. Bilingual storytellers acted as a bridging network in which they link families to facilities and opportunities that support learning, i.e. computer clubs, homework clubs, library programs, further education, health services, etc.

### ***Cultural Conversations – Logan City Council, Queensland***

Logan City is made up of people from across the globe, practicing many different religions, speaking a multitude of languages and expressing and maintaining various cultural traditions. The City is now home to people from at least 215 different nationalities and ethnic groups, including established and recently arrived migrants, descendants of people born overseas and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The planning process for this program was in consultation with ACCESS Community Services Inc., an organisation that provides services for migrants, refugees, humanitarian entrants and temporary protection visa holders within Logan City. Logan City Council Libraries have also had support from a variety of community and government agencies, including the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), Centrelink and QUOTA International Beenleigh, Logan District Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Elders Inc, etc.

The objectives of *Cultural Conversations* are to celebrate cultural differences, to encourage respect and to support social cohesion and a sense of belonging. The program began as an engagement for CALD community members and has evolved over the years, and is now key component of all library activities. Harmony Day or Refugee Week. *Cultural Milestones* now compliments a range of other *Cultural Conversations* events, such as English Conversation Groups, *Yarning with our mob* family story time, and significant indigenous cultural celebrations.

*Cultural Conversations* also acknowledges and values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures of Logan. Aboriginal people have a rich, complex and ancient culture and have occupied Australia for thousands of years. There are over 200 Indigenous language groups, which comprise of detailed clan and family groups.

*Cultural Conversations* events attract key community representatives who often return to join up extended family members and to attend other events. They also attract attendees from other library programs aimed at CALD clients, e.g. the library services' well-patronised English Conversation Group, and school holiday activities.

One of the positive outcome is that a number of families attending *Cultural Conversations* have brought their children to a number of after-school programs including the Homework Help clubs, and the award-winning *Page Turners* language and literacy sessions. Library staff listen to children read, as well as read to children. It is a one-on-one, personalised service, recognising that all children have different reading needs. Both programs have a high ESL attendance.

The program also offers the chance to feature national and state services and promotional opportunities. The *New Arrivals Family Reading Packs Wilbur* has been distributed to participants and is a great engagement point.

### ***Story Time with Dad – Fairfield City Library, New South Wales***

Story time with Dad is a multilingual story time session using bilingual male storytellers who model emergent literacy practices. This encourages dads and granddads to interact positively with their children through reading and talking. Men are specifically invited by their children to attend these sessions which celebrate community languages through songs, stories and craft activities.

The aim of the program is to engage with men from CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) backgrounds and to model to them how they can build good early literacy practices in their own families. By using a mixture a songs, games, stories and rhymes in a variety of community languages, men are able to see, value placed on their own language and culture as well as the importance of spending time with their children.

The importance of fathers modelling positive reading, language and social behaviours with their children cannot be overstated. For communities where many families speak a language other than English and literacy rates are low, this is even more crucial.

This project was the result of a partnership between Fairfield City Library Service, The Smith Family, Learning Links and Uniting Care Burnside through the Australian Government's Communities 4 Children program. Speech pathologists and early childhood educators from Learning Links worked with male staff from the Library and Uniting Care Burnside to develop a story time program where men read stories sing songs and do craft activities with children in their community languages.

Story time with Dad encourages dads and granddads to read, tell stories and play with their children using their family language. The program helps men bond with their children and also aids language development and vocabulary learning. All of these skills help prepare children and their families for starting school.

### **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

One element that has been clearly identified as being crucial to the success of any program is the training of relevant staff that have direct contact with CALD families.

The partnership between Little Big Book Club, MyLanguage and the public library network continues to grow and support the early literacy initiatives.

This year LBBC has developed and implemented a two day Professional Development Workshop - ***Building Foundations for Early Learning*** aimed at professionals working in preschool, childcare centres or libraries. Developed in consultation with the SA Public Library Network, South Australian Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) and the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC).

The aim of this unique and comprehensive professional development initiative is to guide organisations and how their programs can positively and effectively engage with families and very young children in their community.

## THE FUTURE

The Little Big Book Club and MyLanguage partnership is currently in discussions to develop a bilingual story time training and development module for library staff and associated industry professionals. The aim of the program will be to raise awareness amongst staff working with CALD communities to support linguistic and cultural heritage, the prevention of literacy gaps, and the positive contribution that bilingual speaking families provide to Australian communities.

Discussions are also underway for the development of a second *Wilbur* picture book in a selection of CALD languages.

## THE PARTNERS

**This project would not have been possible without the dedication and collaboration of the three partners.**

**LITTLE BIG BOOK CLUB** <http://www.thelittlebigbookclub.com.au/about-us>



*The Big Book Club Inc. (TBBC Inc.)* was established in South Australia in 2003 as a not-for-profit organisation to “promote reading, the discussion of books and the promotion of Australian authors and illustrators”. Since its inception, *TBBC Inc.* has become a leading provider of quality, inclusive programs designed to promote reading.

Since 2005, in partnership with public libraries, early childhood professionals and service providers, *LBBC* has provided support, encouragement and inspiration to parents, families and communities to read, play sing and talk with young children right from the start.

*LBBC* is currently in its eighth year of providing 23,000 FREE It’s Story Time Reading packs to South Australian families with a baby aged 0-12 months, with a further funding commitment until 2016 from the State Government of South Australia. This funding enables *LBBC* to continue its integrated approach to lifelong learning and reading for children in SA.

**MYLANGUAGE** <http://www.mylanguage.gov.au/>



The My Language is a partnership between the State and Territory Libraries of the ACT, NSW, QLD, SA, VIC and WA. The objectives of the partnership are to utilise information technologies to enhance information access for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities.

**PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES [www.libraries.sa.gov.au](http://www.libraries.sa.gov.au)**



PLS is the central support agency for more than 130 public libraries in South Australia. PLS provides a range of state-wide services, which include contract management and consortium management, procurement of materials, free public access internet via cost effective IT network, project and program management and advocacy.

***WILBUR IN TAMIL*** <http://www.thelittlebigbookclub.com.au/media/wilbur-book-reading-in-tamil>

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