THE BOOK WELL PROGRAM - USING THE POWER OF LITERATURE TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES
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The Book Well Program is a collaborative initiative of the State Library of Victoria, the Public Libraries Victoria network and VicHealth. Employing read-aloud reading groups, the program focuses on the power of literature to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. It particularly targets people who are vulnerable due to their situations, such as the homeless, the long-term unemployed, new arrivals in Australia, residents in aged-care facilities and those experiencing mental health problems. The Victorian program was inspired by the United Kingdom’s renowned Get Into Reading program. In March 2010, twenty Victorians were trained over five days to deliver The Book Well Program. This paper discusses the focus, merits and implementation of the Victorian program, provides an evaluation of the program to date, and comments on future directions. This paper is my personal reflection on The Book Well Program.