



WELL READ: Annelie Budgen, Isaac Jacobs and Sue Hill with the special birthday cake. Picture: TRICIA WATKINSON

Perfect 10 is number worth reading about

**DEBORAH BOGLE
BOOKS EDITOR**

THEY were just babies when their parents picked up the first reading packs supplied by *The Advertiser* Little Big Book Club. A decade later, Annelie Budgen, 10, and Isaac Jacobs, nearly 10, are still reaping the benefits of their early reading experiences as the club reaches its own 10th birthday this year.

To celebrate, Blossom Cakes of Morphett Vale made a storybook birthday cake complete with the characters from one of SA's most loved children's stories, Mem Fox's *Where Is the Green Sheep?*

The book is one of hun-

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**THE LITTLE
BIG BOOK CLUB**

dreds of the club's monthly reading recommendations.

Since it was born in 2005, the Little Big Book Club has distributed more than 200,000 free reading packs to children aged 0-3, and helped to establish the Story Time, Rhyme Time and Baby Bounce sessions now offered in 80 per cent of the State's public libraries. In 2013, 184,000 families attended the sessions.

For general manager Sue Hill, the fact the club has not only endured for a decade but in the next 12 months will treble its reach by extending its free reading packs to toddlers and preschoolers vindicates her early confidence.

"I was always confident that the program was strong enough, that libraries and families and the community would see the value of it, and that the government would keep supporting it," she said.

The State Government has continued to fund the club to the tune of \$2.5 million over the past decade.

From 2016, through its extended reading pack initiative,

the club estimates that 63,000 new home libraries will be created using the free books given to families of young children from birth to school age.

In 2011, the results of a three-year longitudinal study by the University of South Australia on the reading habits and impact of the Little Big Book Club for 400 first-time families found 70 per cent read to their children more often.

"They were aware of the importance of reading, but not how much to read, and the value of singing and talking and playing," Ms Hill said.

For February book recommendations and much more, go to littlebigbookclub.com.au