

# A new ERA for English in China

VALERINA CHANGARATHIL

A PARTNERSHIP strategy that “the Chinese will kill for” is underpinning Adelaide-based ERA Publications’ new distribution arrangements in Asia’s biggest market.

Credited with introducing young Australian readers to childhood favourites like *Hairy MacLary*, *Arthur*, *Picasso the Green Tree Frog* and *The Water Tower*, the educational publisher has now roped in multiple Chinese distributors in Chengdu, Shanghai and Hangzhou to ramp up sales.

Flinders Park-based ERA is offering distributors a “combo-deal” on access to its wide range of print and digital content and to Australia-based training, learning and communication using its networks.

Chinese students and practising teachers will use ERA books and online study resources to improve their language skills.

They will also access guest speakers and educational advisers as part of their program and undertake professional development courses organised by ERA with educational organisations in Australia.

“The Chinese want to learn English early on and we are a



**POTENTIAL:** ERA’s Rodney Martin and his daughter Tania enjoy the big books with Walford Anglican year 3 students Chloe Garrels, Mia Worth and Scarlett Papps-Burford. Picture: BIANCA De MARCHI

specialist in that business, but we had to go in with enough intellectual property protections in place,” said Rodney Martin, founder of the family business.

“The best way to do it was to package a relationship — build in content with something more solid.

“So we offer anything right from the ability to set up pen friendships between Chinese

students and Australian kids to facilitating short-term training and tertiary courses for the Chinese teachers and students here using our established networks.

“The deal is you only get the content if you take the package.”

ERA Publications, a family business owned by Rodney and Sandra Martin since 1977, specialises in levelled readers

for junior and primary school children, publishing fiction and nonfiction series and reference books.

Its books have been translated into 19 languages other than English and have been distributed or published in 33 countries.

In 2008, it took some of its content on to a digital platform, in2era.com.au, offering children interactive access to a

whole collection of books across genres. Mr Martin said the add-on services offered to the Chinese wouldn’t bring any financial add-ons but will help build relationships to protect intellectual property.

“We need to ensure publishing survives securely into the future and we can’t ignore the potential of the Chinese market even though the risks are huge,” he said.