

MEDIA RELEASE

DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY CELEBRATES 100 MILLION BOOKS DELIVERED WORLDWIDE

One of the most successful early literacy initiatives in the world, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has dedicated its 100 Millionth Book to the US Library of Congress.

The renowned musician founded the program in 1995 with the aim of bringing free, quality books to children aged 0 – 5 in her home state of Tennessee. The Imagination Library has since expanded to Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, now delivering more than 1 million books a month to families worldwide.

In Australia, almost 200,000 books have been delivered since the program was launched by United Way in 2013, with partners now supporting Imagination Libraries across 51 communities. Australian book leaders such as Penguin Random House, Wombat Books and more than 70 children's authors including Mem Fox, Harrison Craig and Julian Lennon are championing the initiative to ensure the program reaches more children Australia-wide.

On a local level, in Glenelg Shire, over 23,000 books have been delivered to children, thanks to the partnership of United Way Glenelg and Portland Aluminium.

Nicole Angelino, Executive Officer United Way Glenelg said for hundreds of children in families facing financial hardship and social disadvantage, these books provide a critical opportunity to overcome the odds and build the early literacy and numeracy skills needed to thrive in school and beyond.

"As part of the program, the Imagination Library also provides parents and carers with monthly Tip Sheets and additional support for parents to engage in shared reading."

"But while the program has expanded across Australia, there are still many more children in the Glenelg Shire requesting to be part of the Imagination Library," she said.

"Currently, 1 out of every 5 child is starting school unprepared each year. Shared reading through programs such as the Imagination Library has proved one of the most effective ways to build the early education and developmental skills needed to thrive."

Portland Aluminium's educational partnerships reflect their ongoing commitment to the future and encompass a range of initiatives which expose children to quality learning opportunities. Plant Manager Peter Chellis said that the smelter recognises the importance of education, opportunity and leadership for the next generation and are committed to supporting partnerships and initiatives that help build stronger communities into the future.

"To have the opportunity and ability to help educate our youngest generation; to give them the best possible start to life is a privilege. I personally am very proud to be involved in *the Dolly Parton Imagination Library* and I encourage others to donate," he said.

The dedication of the 100 Millionth Book to US Congress with dignitaries and partners of the Imagination Library occurred overnight and can be viewed here <https://youtu.be/pK1R54PWmqg>

To help us bring more new books into the hands of children living in the Glenelg Shire from birth, you can **make a donation** by contacting Nicole Angelino on 0410 513305 mail@unitedwayglenelg.com.au

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