

MEDIA RELEASE

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STARTING SCHOOL WITH THE SKILLS TO THRIVE

Starting school is a significant milestone in the lives of children and their families. It is not unusual for children to take up to six weeks to fully adjust to a new school and routine.

One of the important key indicators for a child to be “school ready” is language development and early literacy, which has been the focus for United Way Glenelg and Portland Aluminium.

Together, United Way Glenelg and Portland Aluminium have been preparing over 900 children for this time and evidence suggests children are reaping the rewards!

Tex Cummins and his Mum, Kymm Reid had been eager for the first day of school to arrive at Portland South Primary School. There were no nerves for Tex who had big sister Billie on hand to show him the way.

Billie Cummins was one of the first children registered to receive books from the Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL) and was just 6 months old when she received her first book! Since then, she has amassed a collection of over 50 books, a book every month to kick start a lifelong love of reading.

Both Tex and Billie both love reading. When the books arrived in the mailbox, it prompted Mum, Kymm, to bring her children together and read the book aloud. A favourite book from the collection is *Belinda* by Pamela Allen.

“We love the program. We are constantly pulling out books and reading together! My third child is now benefiting from the books his big sister received,” said Kymm.

Launched in September 2013, the Imagination Library is providing children from birth to five years of age with a book a month - equating to 12 books per year, 60 books in total per child. The books are provided at no cost to the families thanks to the partnership between United Way Glenelg and Portland Aluminium.

Nicole Carr, Executive Officer, United Way Glenelg said that something as simple as reading can have a major impact on a child’s success later in life.

“If we regularly read to children every day we can better prepare them for their first day of school, ready to learn. The evidence is clear that the period from birth to age five is critical for brain and language development and more books in the home equal better educational outcomes for children”.

Portland Aluminium Plant Manager, Ron Jorgensen, is enthusiastic about the smelter’s involvement in the community and the partnerships that are providing educational opportunities at all levels throughout the Glenelg Shire.

“This is a fantastic partnership that is delivering great outcomes to our youngest generation – reading is a life skill and the love of reading stays with you for life. The Dolly Parton Imagination Library partnership is a wonderful thing to be a part of. We encourage everyone who can, to pledge their support and sponsor a child to receive a free book a month and give them the best start they can have,” he said.

A positive start to school gives children better learning and wellbeing outcomes both during the transition and beyond.

This year marks the 8th year Portland Aluminium have partnered with United Way Glenelg to bring the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to the local community. As of 28 February 2021, over 33,000 books to 900 children have been delivered to children living in the Glenelg Shire community.

For more information on the Dolly Parton Imagination Library including how you can support the program please contact Nicole Carr on 0410 51 3305 or via email mail@unitedwayglenelg.com.au

Photo: Nash, Billie and Tex Cummins have all benefited from books received from the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

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