

MEDIA RELEASE

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Pacific Hydro grant helps deliver books to shires youngest residents

To help increase early reading opportunities for children in the Glenelg Shire community, Pacific Hydro has granted United Way Glenelg \$5,000 to deliver books to children in the home through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

Australian Early Development Census data from 2018 found that only 69.7 % of Glenelg Shire children are entering school prepared, leaving many children vulnerable. Studies show a direct correlation between the success of students and early literacy programs.

"The entire community benefits by getting books in front of children from birth," said Nicole Carr Executive Officer of United Way Glenelg.

"The Imagination Library teaches children early to have an interest in books, build a strong vocabulary, bond with caregivers who are reading to them, and, most importantly, a critical head start for their literacy skills as they head into primary school," said Ms Carr.

A recent survey of the Imagination Library Glenelg Shire program found that most parents and carers (83%) said they felt more confident reading with their child six months into the program, and 72% reported they were spending more quality time together thanks to their participation.

"Interactions with books increased by a whopping 94% just six months after their first book arrived."

Each book is specially chosen by early childhood education specialists with an understanding of the complexity of family backgrounds and the desire to include more culturally relevant materials for indigenous and migrant and refugee families.

"Along with the book, parents and caregivers receive a book tip sheet with advice on how to bring the stories to life, and how to extend the language and learning from each book."

Pacific Hydro's commitment to early literacy has meant an increase in the number of children receiving books.

"We were tracking at around 30% of children between birth and five years accessing the Imagination Library, but this grant will see that increase to 37.54%" concluded Ms Carr.

United Way Glenelg has set an ambitious goal of having over 50% of children registered and receiving books by mid 2022.

Pacific Hydro Senior Project Leader, Community Investment and Communications, Bernadette Holland, wanted to congratulate United Way Glenelg on the huge success of this program.

"Pacific Hydro is thrilled to provide support through our Great South West Sustainable Communities Fund."

"The Fund aims to support communities in building positive, long-term outcomes and capabilities – increasing early literacy and school readiness will have such a positive, long-lasting impact for the children and families involved and also the wider community," concluded Ms Holland.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library was started in 1995 by the iconic singer. It is "dedicated to inspiring a love of reading by gifting books to children from birth to age five, through funding shared by United Way Glenelg, individuals and businesses.

After becoming fully operational in 2013, the program has delivered over 35,000 books and close to 1000 children have or are currently receiving a book each month for free.

Parents can enrol their children in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library online by visiting <https://imaginationlibrary.com/check-availability> or visit the Maternal and Child Health Services, 94 Julia Street Portland.

For more information please contact Nicole Carr on 0410 513 305 or via email mail@unitedwayglenelg.com.au

Photo: Shaun Harrison takes some time out to read to his colleague Sally Buckingham from Pacific Hydro The Forest by Marc Martin, one of the many titles from Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

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