



United Way Glenelg

## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

Wednesday 18 May 2022

### **Community members are being invited to help bring some long-term certainty to a free pre-schooler book program.**

The popularity of an early literacy program Dolly Parton Imagination Library has meant more children in the Glenelg shire will receive books.

However, it will come at a cost, literally. United Way Glenelg which coordinates the program recently made changes so children enrolled from 1 March 2022 will only be guaranteed free books for a minimum of 12 months unless further support from the community can be found.

United Way Glenelg had previously engaged a waitlist, to guarantee that enrolled children would receive free books until they graduate from the program at age 5.

However, this waitlist had grown to over 70 children, some waiting over 8 months to get on the program said United Way Glenelg's executive officer Nicole Carr.

"A review of our procedure, means we are changing the way we manage our waitlist. Evidence quite clearly indicates that children receiving books for even 12 months can establish solid language development. By engaging in a waitlist we are delaying this benefit."

"But we would love to see them continue to receive free books as the program has done in the past, so those who can afford it are encouraged to either pay it forward, attend a fundraising event or encourage their employer or community group to get on board."

Ms Carr said community members can also support the program in all sorts of ways.

"While we are consistently applying for grants, we are also preparing a fundraising event later in the year called Karaoke for a Cause - Songs for Dolly's Library.

Workplace Giving also provides a path of regular funds for the program, a pretax way of donating allowing employees to make their donation in the most tax-effective and efficient way possible.

"By age five about ninety per cent of brain development has occurred, with cognitive and linguistic "building blocks" largely set in place, so helping foster a love of books and spending time with people who read with them before a child reaches school-age is a wonderful investment in a child's future," Ms Carr said.

"With children benefiting most from five years in the program, now is the chance for the community to get behind the program."

Portland's biggest single employer, Portland Aluminium, has made another two-year commitment to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, allowing the program to continue sending specially selected picture books to the 300 already enrolled local children.

Portland Aluminium Community Relations Advisor Anna Impey said partnering with United Way Glenelg to support the Imagination Library into its 9th and 10th years locally was important to the company and its staff because they believe reading from birth forms the foundation for future success.

"We dedicated this money to help families develop stronger relationships with their children through the sharing time that books can help create," Ms Impey said.

"As an employer of people of all ages, this is a wonderful program to be a part of, and helps children thrive."

"Portland Aluminium has supported the program since its inception in 2013 through an amazing \$191,000 in funding which has provided over 38,000 books in the hands of approximately 700 children, as well as providing community awareness through activities and events," said Ms Carr.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library - facilitated by United Way Glenelg - delivers age-appropriate books to the letterboxes of Glenelg Shire children aged under five once a month if they have been registered for the program and there are enough funds to support it at the time. High-quality picture books arrive in the mail, helping encourage a love of books among children and promoting the sharing of stories between generations.

The new procedure means all children who are enrolled in the Imagination Library will gain a minimum of 12 months of books in the home, however it doesn't guarantee they will be a part of the scheme until they are five years old unless more funding is found.

If you wish to make a regular donation go to <https://www.givenow.com.au/uwgimaginationlibrary>

*Photo: Jessica Thornton and son Hugo, pictured with Anna Impey Portland Aluminium Community Relations Advisor, are grateful for the mailing of free books each month.*

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