

MEDIA RELEASE

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Little Hands, Big Stories celebrates culture, creativity and connection

Roars, storytelling, colour and creativity filled Portland Library as kindergarten children from across the region came together for Little Hands, Big Stories, a vibrant celebration of culture, belonging and imagination held as part of the United Nations World Day for Cultural Diversity.

Delivered by United Way Glenelg with support from the Alcoa Foundation and ~~volunteers from~~ Portland Aluminium, the initiative introduced Kindergarten children to different cultures through hands-on craft activities, storytelling and shared conversation.

A short film documenting a session with Elsa MacLeod was also captured by Powerhouse Productions and will be shared with the community following the event.

Throughout the one-hour sessions, children rotated through a range of culturally inspired activities led by Portland Aluminium employees who generously shared elements of their own backgrounds and traditions with the children.

South African employee Salim Ismail guided children through the creation of lion masks while sharing simple facts about lions living in family groups called prides across the African savannah.

Zimbabwean employee Oliver Chitambo introduced children to giraffes through a colourful giraffe craft activity while discussing the unique features of one of the world's tallest animals.

Indian employee Roslet Castelino shared the significance of Diwali, the Festival of Lights, as children created bright paper diyas symbolising light and celebration.

Aboriginal employee Macca Bell spoke with children about the Gunditjmarra people as Traditional Owners, connection to Country and storytelling through art while leading a handprint design activity.

United Way Glenelg Executive Officer Nicole Carr said the initiative provided children with an opportunity to explore cultural diversity in a creative and welcoming environment.

"Little Hands, Big Stories was about creating a positive introduction to cultural diversity for young children through stories, creativity and conversation," Ms Carr said.

"Children are naturally curious and open to learning about others. The activities encouraged them to celebrate differences while recognising the things we all share."

Ms Carr said one of the highlights of the day was the involvement of Portland Aluminium employees who volunteered their time to connect directly with the children.

"It was incredibly special to see employees sharing stories from their backgrounds and engaging with the children through craft, storytelling and play," she said.

“That connection helps children understand that everyone has stories, traditions and experiences that are important.”

Feedback from participating kindergartens reflected the strong impact the initiative had on both children and educators, with many describing the sessions as engaging, meaningful and memorable.

“It was very well received by the children and they loved it. We also enjoyed it as staff,” Marjoné Zeeman, Elsa MacLeod Kindergarten teacher shared.

Jenny Cowan from Goodstart Kindergarten said it was “lovely for the children to meet people from different cultures” and praised the volunteers and engaging craft activities.

Kalbarri Kindergarten teacher Carly Thompson also reflected positively on the experience, sharing that “the children wouldn't stop talking about it all afternoon.”

The project also supported the expansion of a culturally diverse costume lending library, the purchase of culturally inclusive books and the filming of Portland Aluminium employees discussing the childhood books and stories that shaped them.

Anna Impey, Senior Community Relations at Portland Aluminium, said the initiative reflected the Alcoa Foundation's ongoing commitment to supporting programs that promote inclusion, education and meaningful community connection.

“The experience has created a welcoming space for our employees to share their culture through storytelling, creativity and shared experiences, while building meaningful connections with the children and families,” she said.

Through craft, conversation and storytelling, Little Hands, Big Stories showed that even the smallest hands can build a more connected community.

Photo: *Oliver Chitambo from Zimbabwe guided children from Goodstart Kindergarten in creating colourful giraffe crafts while sharing fun facts about one of Africa's most recognisable animals.*

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Further information:

The Alcoa Foundation is the philanthropic arm of the global aluminium producer, Alcoa. Founded in 1952, it is one of the largest corporate foundations in the United States. It partners with communities to address local needs and opportunities in a sustainable manner. The foundation provides support for programs that protect and preserve the environment and that promote equitable access to education and skills-building opportunities in areas where Alcoa operates throughout the world.
