

MEDIA RELEASE

DATE: 28 August 2026

Portland Aluminium renews commitment to early literacy through three-year partnership

United Way Glenelg and Portland Aluminium have marked Book Week by announcing a renewed three-year partnership to support Dolly Parton's Imagination Library across the Glenelg Shire.

The announcement comes during one of the most important dates on the early literacy calendar, when communities across Australia celebrate books, stories and the role reading plays in children's lives.

The new agreement is equivalent to the delivery of close to 20,000 books over the next three years, helping United Way Glenelg continue providing free, age-appropriate books directly to children's homes.

The announcement also comes during a deeply emotional week, following the passing of Dolly Parton. For United Way Glenelg, the renewed partnership holds special meaning, as Dolly's vision has connected local children and families through books for more than 13 years.

The enduring partnership began when United Way Glenelg introduced Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to the region in 2013. Since then, Portland Aluminium has helped make books and shared reading accessible to families throughout the Glenelg Shire.

United Way Glenelg Executive Officer Nicole Carr said the renewed agreement was a fitting tribute to Dolly's enduring legacy.

"While we are deeply saddened by Dolly's passing, there is something incredibly meaningful about announcing this renewed commitment in the same week," Ms Carr said.

"Through the Imagination Library, Dolly became part of thousands of childhoods and family memories across the Glenelg Shire. This partnership ensures her dream will continue, with the equivalent of close to 20,000 more books helping local children discover the joy of reading."

"Portland Aluminium has been part of the Imagination Library story in our community from the very beginning.

"This three-year agreement provides the certainty we need to continue enrolling local children and delivering a new book to their home every month.

"Whether a child lives in Portland, Heywood, Casterton, Dartmoor, Nelson or one of our smaller communities, they have the same opportunity to experience the excitement of receiving a book addressed personally to them."

Recent Australian research into Dolly Parton's Imagination Library found the program encouraged sustained reading practices and supported the development of emerging literacy skills.

The three-year study conducted in Tamworth found participating children were read to more frequently, for longer periods and had more books in their homes than the average Australian child.

After three years, 74 per cent of participating caregivers were reading to their children daily or more, compared with a national benchmark of 58 per cent. The research also found 92 per cent were reading with their children for more than 10 minutes each day.

The benefits extended beyond literacy. Eighty-five per cent of caregivers reported feeling more connected to their child and experiencing increased quality family time, while children who were read to daily demonstrated stronger emerging literacy skills.

Ms Carr said the research reinforced the value of providing books directly to families.

"The Imagination Library is about much more than receiving a book in the mail," Ms Carr said.

"It encourages parents and carers to spend time reading, talking and connecting with their child. These regular moments help develop vocabulary, confidence, curiosity and the early skills children need as they prepare for school."

Portland Aluminium Senior Community Relations and Communications Anna Impey Clint McLachlan said the renewed agreement reflected the smelter's commitment to creating lasting opportunities for local children and families.

"Portland Aluminium is proud to have supported Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in the Glenelg Shire since it began in 2013," Ms Impey said.

"Book Week is a fitting time to renew this partnership and recognise the important role that books, stories and shared reading play in giving children a strong start.

"Continuing this partnership is an investment in local children, their families and the future of our community."

Ms Carr said Portland Aluminium's contribution to the program extended beyond its financial support.

"Their employees have helped us share stories, deliver literacy activities and celebrate important milestones," Ms Carr said.

"It is a genuine community partnership that continues to evolve while remaining focused on giving local children the best possible start"

Photo: Anna Impey thrilled to announce the continuation of Dolly Partons Imagination Library

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Nicole Carr, United Way Glenelg Executive Officer
Phone: 0410 513 305 Email: mail@unitedwayglenelg.com.au