

MEDIA RELEASE

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Read Across Glenelg keeps the love of reading growing

Students across the Glenelg Shire shared in the joy of storytelling during United Way Glenelg's annual **Read Across Glenelg** program.

With the support of Portland Aluminium, employee volunteers visited 11 local primary schools to read *The Colours of Home* by author and illustrator **Sally Soweol Han**. The book was shortlisted in the **Early Childhood category of the 2026 Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards**.

The beautifully illustrated story follows a young girl as she connects the two countries, she calls home by finding familiar colours in the natural world around her. It explores belonging, change, culture and the connections that can help a new place feel like home.

Schools from across the Glenelg Shire took part, including schools in **Portland, Heywood, Dartmoor, Narrawong, Merino and Bolwarra**.

Each school received a copy of the book, with students also taking part in an activity inspired by the story.

United Way Glenelg Executive Officer Nicole Carr said Book Week was an important reminder that supporting children's reading should continue throughout their school years.

"Families often spend a lot of time reading with children when they are very young, but that support can begin to drop away once children learn to read independently," Ms Carr said.

"Learning to read doesn't mean children no longer benefit from sharing books with their parents and carers. Talking about stories, visiting the library, listening to children read and continuing to read aloud together can all help maintain their interest and enjoyment."

The most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows participation in reading for pleasure among children aged five to 14 fell from 79 per cent in 2017–18 to 72 per cent in 2021–22.

More recent Deakin University research involving more than 13,000 Australian secondary students found nearly one-third did not read for pleasure during the school term, while only 15 per cent read daily.

"The findings highlight the importance of building strong reading habits during the primary-school years and encouraging families to remain involved as their children become independent readers," Ms Carr said.

"Book Week is a wonderful opportunity to remind the whole community that reading matters."

"Read Across Glenelg also shows children that reading is not something that only happens in the classroom. It is valued by families, workplaces and people throughout our community."

Portland Aluminium Senior Community Relations and Communications Anna Impey said the school visits had been a highlight for the participating employee volunteers.

"Everyone has been raving about the experience and feeling so grateful to have been involved," Ms Impey said.

"Visiting our schools and connecting with young people was a real highlight and a lovely reminder of how rewarding it is to work alongside our community."

Read Across Glenelg is part of United Way Glenelg's broader commitment to early childhood literacy. Since introducing Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in 2013, the organisation has delivered more than 61,000 books directly to children across the Glenelg Shire.

"We thank Portland Aluminium, its employee volunteers and each participating school for helping us celebrate stories and keep the importance of reading in the community conversation," Ms Carr said.

Photo: Portland Aluminium employee Geordie Cook reads to the Foundation Class at Portland North.

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