

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**A childhood cricket ball inspires a lasting legacy for junior sport**

A childhood memory of having to scrape together enough money to buy a cricket ball has inspired a private benefactor to make a remarkable \$1 million gift to help local children participate in sport for generations to come.

The gift will establish a Junior Sports Fund, to be managed by United Way Glenelg.

The Fund has been created with a simple vision: that financial circumstances should not determine whether a child gets the opportunity to play sport.

For the benefactor, the motivation behind the gift is deeply personal.

Growing up, money was tight, and he remembers the challenge of finding enough money each week for something as simple as a cricket ball so he and his mates could play.

It is an experience that has stayed with him throughout his life and shaped his desire to make things a little easier for the generations that follow.

His vision is for the gift to keep giving. The capital will be invested and managed by United Way Glenelg with the intention of creating an enduring fund that will support junior sport and opportunities for young people across the Glenelg Shire for generations to come.

Importantly, the Fund recognises that the cost of participating in sport extends well beyond registration.

Sporting clubs and community organisations will be able to seek support to reduce the financial barriers facing children and families. Individual children may also be supported through applications made via their sporting club, providing privacy for families while ensuring appropriate accountability and management of funds.

Support could include registration and participation fees, uniforms, sporting equipment, travel and other expenses that can make it difficult for a young person to participate.

The first grant round is expected to open in 2028, allowing time for the Fund to be invested and begin generating returns. Sporting clubs and other community organisations, including schools working with children and young people across the Glenelg Shire will be invited to apply for funding, with further details about eligibility and the application process to be released closer to the opening of the round.

The establishment of the Fund comes as new Australian research highlights just how significant the cost of participating in community sport has become.

Research led by Federation University's Professor Rochelle Eime, published in August 2026, found the average total annual cost for a child to participate in community-level sport in

Australia was \$4,567. Even the basic costs of getting a child onto the field or court, registration, uniforms and equipment, averaged \$1,161 per year.

The research also found 78 per cent of children reported cost as a limiting factor in participation. For regional and remote families, the burden can be even greater, with significantly higher travel and accommodation costs than those faced by families in major cities.

United Way Glenelg Executive Officer Nicole Carr said the research reinforced the importance of removing financial barriers to participation.

"We know the cost of junior sport can add up very quickly, but seeing those figures really puts the challenge facing families into perspective," Ms Carr said.

"It might be registration, a uniform, equipment or the cost of travelling to compete. Sometimes it is not one large expense that prevents a child from participating, but a combination of all those smaller costs.

"For families in a regional community like ours, travel is also part of the equation. If your child needs to travel to Warrnambool, Hamilton, Mount Gambier or further afield to participate or compete, those costs can quickly become significant."

Ms Carr said the Fund had the potential to make a difference not only to individual children, but also to the clubs working hard to make sport accessible to everyone.

"This is an extraordinary legacy for the future, one that has the potential to alter the trajectory of children who might otherwise miss out on accessing sport.

"This gift is significant, but what really stands out is the vision behind it and what it can achieve over generations."

Ms Carr said participation in sport could have benefits extending well beyond physical activity.

"Sport creates friendships, confidence, connection and a sense of belonging. For some children, being part of a club or team can become an incredibly important part of their lives.

"What is particularly special about this gift is the benefactor's wish for the Fund to keep helping local children long after any of us involved today are here to see it."

The Junior Sports Fund will form part of United Way Glenelg's commitment to building long-term community resources that respond to local needs now and into the future.

While the \$1 million gift is significant, United Way Glenelg hopes the story behind it may also encourage others to consider what leaving a legacy could look like for them.

A gift through a Will, a living gift or a contribution towards an existing fund can all become part of something that continues to strengthen the Glenelg Shire community into the future.



"This isn't about the size of the gift," Ms Carr said. "It's about thinking about what matters to you and what you would like to make possible for future generations."

"For this benefactor, the answer is wonderfully simple: he wants more local kids to have the chance to play."

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