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MEDIA RELEASE

INNOVATIVE IMAGINATION LIBRARY WORKING BEYOND 9 TO 5

Coonamble is one of 25 NSW Local Government Areas funded for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library by the Department of Education under the Brighter Beginnings Initiative.

All children born from 1 January 2022 living in the Coonamble Local Government Area, are eligible. The project began in January 2022.

The idea is that at the first baby health check, the Community and Family Health Nurse helps parents fill out a registration form and presents the baby with their first book.

The health nurse then brings the registrations to the library and Council's librarian enters the details into the registration system of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. To date, 190 children have been registered within the Coonamble Shire Local Government Area.

Children receive their books in the mail monthly after the first one. The cost of the project is \$9 per book per month per child. The ages targeted by the Brighter Beginnings and Dolly Parton Imagination Library are 0-5 years.

Mayor Tim Horan said, "Supporting early literacy is especially important in rural and remote areas as it builds confidence in not just the infants, but in the parents, carers and other members of the family."

"Encouraging the carers to read to and with their children on a regular basis can help establish and strengthen relationships within the family itself," the Mayor said.

Following the initial State Government support, Council has now stepped in to fund the project in the 2024-25 financial year to ensure it continues.

The books are sourced by United Way Australia, who partner with publishers, families, authors, librarians and academics to select age-appropriate and culturally sensitive local and international materials.

United Way Australia has a committee of independent experts in the field of children's education that use the Penguin Random House Australia catalogue to choose books.

Books are sent out to parents, at no cost to the child's family, with a short leaflet describing the book, how to read to and with the child and offering suggestions on how to discuss the book with the child.

Coonamble Library is the local contact point for questions relating to the Dolly Party Imagination Library. Library staff register the child as a member of the library and send their library card, a welcome card and a board book to them.

General Manager Paul Gallagher said, “We are thrilled to contribute to such a worthy cause that promotes early childhood literacy and fosters a love for reading and books among not just young children, but whole families.”

“Our organisation recognises the importance of literacy in the early stages of a child’s development, and we believe that fostering a love for reading at an early age can have a lasting positive impact on their education journey.”

If you have a child born in the Coonamble Shire after 2022 who is not receiving the books, please contact the Coonamble Library on 02 68271925 for further information on how to register.

Paul Gallagher
GENERAL MANAGER

Background

Dolly Parton on her website about why she started the program - “Hi everybody. This is Dolly. Before he passed away, my Daddy told me the Imagination Library was probably the most important thing I had ever done. I can’t tell you how much that meant to me because I created the Imagination Library as a tribute to my Daddy.

He was the smartest man I have ever known but I know in my heart his inability to read probably kept him from fulfilling all of his dreams. Inspiring kids to love to read became my mission. In the beginning, my hope was simply to inspire the children in my home county but here we are today with a worldwide program that gives a book a month to well over 1 million children.

Of course, I have not done this alone. The real heroes of our story are the thousands of local organisations who have embraced my dream and made it their own. They raise millions of dollars each year and wake up every day with a passion to make sure their kids have every opportunity to succeed.

It’s been quite a journey but we have so much more left to do. I would love for your community to join our family so please take the time to explore our website. Let’s share this dream that all children should grow up in a home full of books. The first step is always the hardest, but you’ll never know unless you try.”