

Zone VC01/2/3 Gala in Ballarat celebrating 65 years of VIEW at the Ballarat Golf Club.

What a glorious vision of ladies in all shades of sapphire representing most of the 17 clubs that make up this zone stretching from Shepparton and Bendigo to Kyneton to Warrnambool. Hamilton, Geelong area and Keilor. A wonderful program highlighting the work of VIEW and The Smith Family was presented by inspiring speakers.

National Councillor **Janet Park** welcomed everyone and acknowledged many past NC and ZC including past National President Marg Woodhouse.

Bev Orgill from Bendigo paid tribute to the twenty-three VIEW ladies in our Zone that had passed away over the past year recognizing their contributions to VIEW and their clubs.

Kath Chapman (Keilor) and Sunny Watts (Bendigo) were presented with the *Making a Difference Awards* by Janet Park

Janet Park reflected on her time in VIEW and how a chance encounter with a lady about joining a VIEW Book Club, attending some club meetings and being welcomed was the start of her association with VIEW culminating in the role of National Councilor

She also commented on visiting the clubs in the Zone how impressed she has been with the many varied ways clubs raise money- from Bunnings BBQs to Fashion Parades and Trivia Nights to Christmas wrapping. They are currently sponsoring 216 Learning For Life Students. Clubs educate and inspire members by hosting diverse guest speakers, fulfilling the E of VIEW. Clubs have received grants to purchase equipment to help them manage their clubs.

The General Manager of the Smith Family, Victoria Anton Leshern coming from a background in youth work including juvenile justice, recognised that the way to improve young people's lives starts in the Early Years and we can change the poverty cycle.

Anton acknowledged the 65 years of VIEW – Advocating, Connecting, Educating, Volunteering and Friendship. He said that the generosity of VIEW helps lighten the load.

He flagged several areas that the Smith Family has made some strategic changes.

1. The Tertiary Scholarships will now have no cash element as there are many other avenues for students to gain funding but will continue to support students at their level with "Tertiary Together"
2. Due to the cost-of-living crisis there will be some cuts to personnel in programs that have the least participation and may see some Learning Clubs cease.
3. Increasing the use of Online/Virtual programs.
4. A Data Exchange - will reduce the time taken to receive school reports and increase the timely response to student needs.

The Victorian Government has pledged \$6 million over 4 years. This money is being used to underpin the acquisition of new sponsors which ultimately will enable them to increase the number of students. He outlined the breakdown of the LfL funding where \$600 is given to the families to manage the needs of their children with uniforms, excursions etc. The rest goes to wrap around suite of programs and to team members to liaise with parents and see that goals are met.

Anton's passion for the work he is doing was very evident.

Rebecca Robertson is the Team Leader for the Ballarat and Geelong LFL program. Rebecca acknowledged that when living in Horsham, she was an LFL student herself and without it her family would not be where they are now. She was a Rotary Exchange student and trained as a teacher. Quite a success story.

She oversees the team that manages Family Partnerships and the Program Coordinators. Ballarat has seen an increase in the number of schools and students involved in the program and likewise Geelong continues to grow.

Rebecca mentioned the Homework Clubs and Transition to High School programs as having a big impact on the students, breaking generational poverty.

Four of her team members were in attendance.

Celebrating the 65 years of VIEW Freda from the Leopold Club presented a PowerPoint journey from the 1960's to 2025 outlining the political, social and cultural times highlighting the changes for women in society and the growth of VIEW Clubs around Australia. Quoting the founder George Forbes – The best thing I've ever done.

VIEW's support has grown to become the largest community sponsorship of the Learning for Life program, with members sponsoring over 1,800 students.

The organization continues to be a vital source of volunteers, fundraising, and community connections for The Smith Family.

(There is an extensive history of VIEW Clubs on <https://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/view-clubs/about-us/history>)

Guest Speaker Elida Brereton – Educator, Leader. Advocate and Movie Star

Elida Brereton, respected educator and former Principal of Camberwell High School, has devoted her career to education and student wellbeing. She has also taught in Geelong and London and has been a strong voice through the National Centre Against Bullying and the Alannah & Madeline Foundation.

Her leadership has been recognised nationally — receiving the State School Principal Award and being named by the National Council of Women among 50 influential women in education.

Her address was advertised as ***“A school principal relates to her pretend self”*** and little did we know that this came from the fact that Elida is also well known for her appearance as the school principal Mrs Murray in the ABC television series *Summer Heights High* (2007). She was humorous and engaging as she recounted her experiences during the filming of the series, delighting her audience with many behind-the-scenes stories.

Passionate, professional, and always focused on young people, Elida Brereton continues to inspire teachers and students alike.

Finally

Many members went home with interesting raffle prizes donated by the clubs to deliver to winning ticket holders and items from a Christmas themed trading table. Proceeds will go to Digital Learning Packages. Events like these bring members together to learn more about VIEW and The Smith Family, to celebrate our successes, to make connections and especially to have fun and enjoy the friendship.