

Media Release



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NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK A CHANCE TO CELEBRATE THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS IN CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

This National Volunteer Week [19-25 May], children's education charity The Smith Family is celebrating the role of volunteers in strengthening local communities, while helping to improve the lives of students experiencing disadvantage through education.

With this year's sector-wide National Volunteer Week theme being 'Connecting Communities', The Smith Family's CEO Doug Taylor says volunteers play an important role in fostering a strong sense of community for students.

"The idea that it takes a village to raise a child is reflected in our volunteers' work. Bringing together different people within a community, outside of a student's immediate family, to offer support and guidance with their education, makes a world of difference to their confidence and learning outcomes."

Last year almost 5,000 individuals volunteered with The Smith Family, amounting to a total of more than 123,000 hours of service donated.

We also acknowledge the contribution to The Smith Family's work of over 13,000 members of VIEW Clubs in communities across the country, who last year contributed over 70,000 volunteer hours. VIEW Clubs offer a wonderful opportunity for women to build lasting connections within their local communities.

Thanks to this immense support, The Smith Family has been able to bring its life-changing learning programs to more young people, across more Australian communities, than ever before.

"Volunteers are integral to our work, and thanks to their ongoing support we're able to continue to grow our reach and improve the lives of young people experiencing disadvantage," Mr Taylor says.

22-year-old Luke Tarola from Werribee, VIC is a university student and maths tutor who volunteers at his local *Learning Club*. He was drawn to the opportunity as a tangible way of helping students.

"I've lived in Werribee my whole life and I wanted to help students who haven't had access to the same opportunities as those from wealthier areas. I've always valued education so being able to impart that onto other students is rewarding and seeing them respond positively to learning is really exciting."

In Newcastle, NSW former science teacher Pamela Forbes began volunteering at her local *Learning Club* when she moved to the area, as a way to interact with her community and stay involved with a young person's perspective of what's happening in the world.

“As a former teacher I believe a good education is really important. I think it's beneficial for children to mix with adults - both young and old - other than their family. They need to experience different ideas, perspectives and ways people do things.”

“Volunteering gives me a really good feeling, and it's a great reward seeing the happiness of the students.”

The Smith Family welcomes the donation of time through a variety of volunteering opportunities around the country. Volunteers can commit to as little as an hour a week or participate in longer-term roles. A range of opportunities are available to help children in need, such as tutoring through a local *Learning Club* or online reading program, *student2student*, as well as administration roles that help the organisation's broader operations.

“Volunteers working directly in our programs or alongside our teams in capacity-building roles – bring people together, creating inclusive and thriving communities where students can overcome adversity and reach their goals.”

To see available opportunities in your area, please visit www.thesmithfamily.com.au/volunteer

The Smith Family is currently running its annual [Winter Appeal](#) which aims to raise \$7.9 million nationally to support more children in need. Volunteers support many of the programs funded by donations to the Winter Appeal.

The Smith Family's CEO Doug Taylor is available for interview.

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The Smith Family is a children's education charity that helps young Australians experiencing disadvantage to create better futures for themselves through harnessing the power of education. Visit thesmithfamily.com.au

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