



# Autumn

## Newsletter

We hope your 2026 is off to a wonderful start!

It was fantastic to see so many of you at our Sandringham Service Centre Grand Re-Opening and at the recent volunteer training sessions. Your energy and involvement truly make these moments special.

The year has begun with great momentum, including the arrival of our new Volunteer Engagement Manager, Adele (you can learn more about her below). We also extend a very warm welcome to all the new volunteers who have joined the Family Life community- be sure to say hello when you see them in-store!

Looking ahead, please save the date for our annual National Volunteer Week lunch on Wednesday, June 3rd. And keep an eye on your inbox for some fantastic training opportunities coming soon through Volunteering Victoria.

We hope you enjoy this edition and catching up on everything happening across Family Life.

**Scan to access the  
Volunteer Hub Webpage:**



A digital copy of this newsletter has been emailed to your inbox. Please contact a member of the volunteering engagement team if you have not received this.



## Celebrating Community Impact with Charitable Reuse Australia

We were delighted to welcome our friends from Charitable Reuse Australia to our Highett Community Op Shop recently, where they filmed some exciting new content for social media.

Charitable Reuse Australia champions the work of charitable reuse organisations across the country through advocacy, education, capacity-building and impact measurement. They're the national network supporting purpose-driven reuse enterprises just like ours.

Their team spent the day capturing the heart of our Highett Op Shop, spotlighting our wonderful volunteers and Family Life staff, and exploring the positive impact we're creating together for our community and the environment.

Keep an eye on Charitable Reuse Australia's social channels... you might just spot some familiar Family Life faces!



## Celebrating the Grand Re-Opening of our Sandringham Service Centre

In February, we proudly celebrated a significant milestone: the Grand Re-opening of our Sandringham Service Centre. After 55 years of supporting local families, the centre has been refreshed and upgraded to better reflect the growth of our programs and the evolving needs of our community.

It was wonderful to welcome so many of our valued partners, funders, supporters, staff, and- of course- our incredible volunteers who make our work possible. Together, we marked this special moment, with our long-standing volunteer patron Malcolm Parks officially cutting our signature orange ribbon.

“Today, this building stands as it always has, not as an endpoint, but as a platform. A platform for care. For connection. For hope. May it continue to be a place where families feel welcomed, supported, and believed in.” - Allison Wainwright, CEO.

Thank you to everyone who joined us in celebrating this historic moment. We are excited to open the doors of our refreshed centre and continue serving the community for many years ahead.

You can view photos from the celebration in our Facebook album here:





## Welcome to our Volunteer Engagement Manager, Adele!

We're delighted to introduce Adele, who has recently joined our Volunteer Team as our new Volunteer Engagement Manager. With extensive experience in volunteer management across the not-for-profit and health sectors, Adele brings a wealth of knowledge, energy, and passion to Family Life.

A long-time op-shop lover, Adele is thrilled to become part of the Family Life community. She's especially looking forward to connecting with our wonderful volunteers, supporting your journeys, and working alongside the dedicated teams in our stores.

Many of you may have already met Adele during her visits to stores or at our recent Volunteer Information Sessions. If you spot her out and about, please give her a warm welcome! As always, Adele is here to support you - along with our Coordinators, Yolande and Karen, whenever you need guidance throughout your volunteering experience.

**"I was introduced to volunteering as a toddler, my Nan would take me with her on her Meals on Wheels deliveries. I knew then, even as a little tacker, that it was about so much more than dropping food to people. I love being around people and wanted to understand how I could make a positive difference in communities. So, I studied Sociology at University and have been lucky to work in some amazing NFP and Health sector volunteer management roles. When I saw this role for Family Life, I was instantly intrigued, I asked people I knew and respected about the organisation and heard only positive stories! I feel so lucky to be here and can't wait to get stuck in and help contribute to Family Life."**

**What's your all-time best op-shop find?**

Full length tan suede vintage jacket, I was flabbergasted with excitement and was walking on air for weeks!

**What do you think makes op shopping such a great experience for the community?**

It is the perfect storm of recycling, finding treasures, chatting with people, getting out of the house, having a groove to the music and getting lost in your thoughts.

**What has been your most rewarding experience working with volunteers?**

100% seeing likeminded people meet and become friends, who otherwise never would have met. I have been so fortunate to witness this happen many times and it truly is so wonderful to meet new friends doing something you are passionate about.

**What's one thing you wish everyone knew about volunteer work?**

That volunteering is good for all parts of your life (physical, mental and overall wellbeing) and the best part is that our families and communities benefit from it too. It is a true win-win!

**What's a book, podcast, or show you're loving at the moment?**

I am into my podcasts at the moment and have been listening to 'Small Town Dicks', it follows Detectives in small town America, it is true crime, so won't be for everyone. It is hosted by Yearly Smith (Lisa from The Simpsons!) and her partner. If you are a true crime fan, give it a shot!



## Walk With Me: Program Spotlight

Family Life is launching Walk With Me, a new Children's Group in Term 2, 2026. The first group will run from a community space in Narre Warren South and is designed for children aged 4–12 from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds whose parents are separated.

This group offers a safe and culturally sensitive environment where children can explore and make sense of the changes happening in their families. Through creative, play-based activities and supportive group experiences, children are encouraged to build emotional literacy and body awareness while learning about the different ways distress can be expressed both physically and culturally. The program is also designed to strengthen each child's sense of identity, belonging, and cultural pride, helping them feel recognised and valued for who they are.

Across six weekly sessions, children will gently explore themes such as understanding family change, feeling emotionally safe, finding comfort through familiar routines like food and culture, building safe relationships, connecting with peers, and drawing strength from their cultural backgrounds and personal hopes for the future.

We look forward to welcoming our first group and supporting children as they navigate change with growing confidence, resilience, and a strong sense of self.

For more information about Family Life's programs, and to get in touch, visit:  
[www.familylife.com.au](http://www.familylife.com.au)



## Celebrating our Mornington Community Op Shop

Our beloved Mornington Op Shop proudly celebrated its third year on the Mornington Peninsula last year- a milestone that reflects the incredible community spirit, generosity, and dedication that make this store so special.

We spent some time with the Mornington team to learn more about what sets this store apart and why locals love dropping in for a browse, a chat and a great find. A heartfelt thank you to Store Manager, Sarah, for sharing her insights and giving us a deeper look into the heart of the Mornington community. Her passion, and the enthusiasm of the entire volunteer team, is a big part of what makes this store shine.

We invite you to discover more about Mornington's story and what makes it such a cherished part of the Family Life family.

### **What makes the Mornington Community Store special?**

Store Manager, Sarah's response is a resounding, "Community connection! An example of this was at Christmas time when we decorated the main street trees. A lady from our community collaborated with local stores to yarn bomb trees. This was the second year we've done this. We have about six volunteers who knit (and now teach other volunteers). Together, they put together some amazing tree covers for three of the trees in the street! The group met every Thursday to work on the project and we revealed the trees on the 1st of December (also our store's third birthday). It really brought the whole street to life! "

People of all ages are welcome in the Mornington store. Sarah has welcomed students from many local schools giving them a head start in their working/volunteering experience through providing a space to grow confidence and learn the magic of opportunity stores. There are also lots of volunteers at retirement age, and everything in between. Having so many different people at the store keeps the space inclusive, vibrant and thriving.

### **What is unique about this store?**

The space is so big and full of colour. Sarah loves changing the store every week, which volunteers and customers love to see. It is like a new shopping experience every time our customers come in. The site was originally an art shop and often customers ask about our unique 'paint splattered' flooring.

### **What is the most interesting thing you have sold in the store?**

Sarah recalls that on a busy day she pulled out some unique jewellery, not realising it was worth anything special. She soon realised it was worth thousands of dollars! A great donation for the Mornington Op shop and Family Life.

“We sell lots of interesting bits and pieces. A memorable piece was an old record player from the early 1900’s. This was such a great conversation piece, as everyone who saw it had a story from their childhood. Great examples of lovely moments shared with our community.”

### **Three words to describe the perfect op shop:**

Fun, Kath & Kim (laughing), funky!

### **Any other comments about the store?**

Sarah loves being in the store and thinks of her crew as her extended family.



## Rosie, Behind the Sorting Room Door!

Rosie, one of our incredible long-standing volunteers, recently had a moment in the spotlight as she was featured in the Charitable Reuse Australia video series filmed at our Highett Community Op Shop!

Rosie has been a much-loved member of our Highett team for nearly eight years, bringing kindness, enthusiasm, and a wonderful sense of community to every shift. She is always one of the first to speak passionately about the joy and purpose she finds in volunteering with Family Life, and her advocacy has helped many others discover the rewarding experience of giving back through our stores.

“Once you start volunteering, you realise just how many meaningful connections you can build - with the store, the customers, and the community.”

“When I first started volunteering, it was a way to stay involved in the community. But over time, it’s become about Family Life and the people. Our customers know me, and I’ve watched their kids grow up. I’ve built real connections and that means the most to me.” — Rosie, Family Life Volunteer.

Keep an eye on the Charitable Reuse Australia socials to spot Rosie in action!