

The HU4K Focus

Hands Up4Kids
READING VOLUNTEERS



Newsletter 1/2025

Chairperson's Report:

Welcome to 2025. I can't believe the year.

Here we are at the beginning of another year for students in our schools to have the benefit of having a "special friend" to hear them read, support and encourage them, and take an interest in them as individuals.

Recently, I have been in the shopping centre and at the event at the SW Sports Centre, 'Come and Try Day' and have been encouraged by the recognition of our name and logo by the general public. Lots of 'I do that' or 'I've done that' or 'my school/kids have that' All were very positive which is a great reflection of the calibre of our volunteers in the schools.

Also, in recent weeks I have been inundated with information on volunteer organisations and opportunities for community groups so am very impressed that our volunteers choose HU4K to support. We are very lucky.

Don't forget, word of mouth is a powerful tool and we are very grateful for you to spread the word of HU4K to others to keep our numbers up in current schools and help us spread to new schools. It seems there are children in need of assistance in every school area.

Enjoy the year .

Helen Foan

Looking Back at Christmas 2024 with Bunbury & surrounds and Margaret River & Augusta groups:

Coordinators , Bunbury & surrounds (right) from left Maddie Kiernan-Smith, Cheryl McQueen, Jenny Pyper, Colleen Fogarty, Lorraine Schram, Mary Cain, and Terri Knight were recognised for their hard work throughout the year. Thank you to our esteemed coordinators.



A festive luncheon was enjoyed by HU4K volunteers, supporters and board members at our Christmas Luncheons in December 2024. At Eaton Community Hive Lorraine Schram, (below) volunteer, coordinator, board member, head cook and Christmas gingerbread house raffle maker extraordinaire was on hand to present to raffle winner Margaret Frost the winning gingerbread house.



Festive volunteers (left) from Margaret River and Augusta celebrating in style at their Christmas event.



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Missed a newsletter? Check out HU4K website where you can find recent newsletters—
www.handsup4kids.org.au

WA Term dates for 2025

Semester 1

Term 1: Wednesday 5th February to Friday 11th April

Term 2: Monday 28th April to Friday 4th July

Semester 2

Term 3: Monday 21st July to Friday 26th September

Term 4: Monday 13th October to Thursday 18th December



When you become a volunteer, you think about how it makes you feel, until you actually help someone and see how it makes them feel!



On the 7th March 2025 Jan Akaczonok organised an information desk at Bunbury Forum shopping centre to raise HU4K awareness in the community and seek new volunteers. Many thanks to the helpers on the day Garry and Caroline Oxer, Lorraine Schram, Nicki Phelps, Theresa Walsh, Helen Foan and Jan Akaczonok.

Photo from L-R Suzanne Gratwick, Helen Foan and Lorraine Schram

HU4K Focus Newsletter invited Julie Kinney from Margaret River to partake in our *Spotlight* question segment. Thank you to Julie for joining in the fun.

How long have you been a volunteer?

I can't really remember when I started with HU4K but it was whenever it was first introduced to Margaret River. I think about 6-7 years. I have had my lovely current teacher for 4 years and the former who sadly had to change schools for about 3.

What do you like most about being a volunteer?

I love watching the students gather confidence throughout the year and enjoy their little confidences once they feel secure. I must admit to feeling the need to do much more with some students I have had over the years.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Perth but have lived in other parts of the world since becoming an adult.

What was your favourite childhood book?

I loved Australian Mary Grant Bruce books. A series ...Norah of the Billabong... I think I read everyone because they were in my primary school library, which in those days consisted of one bookcase per room. I was allowed to check each classroom in the company of my teacher once I discovered Norah. Books were such treasure to only be given for birthdays and Christmas.

What is your favourite comfort food?

Favourite comfort food was tinned tomato soup and milk arrowroot biscuits though not together. Everything we generally ate was homemade.

What are you reading right now?

I have just finished two books: The Garden Against Time by Olivia Laing and Memorial Days by Geraldine Brooks. Loved both. I am about to get into Mr and Mrs Gould by Grantlee Kieza.

If you were stranded on a desert island, what would you take with you?

My Desert Island requirements, oh dear. Perhaps one of my favourite gardening books The Gardens of the Riviera by Vivian Russell. A pencil, I would certainly need a knife to help me with the fish I might catch and the coconuts that no doubt will fall and to sharpen my pencil. I think I would like a hat, my glasses, and a toothbrush. Is that too practical. I will have to sing to myself for music.

Any tips or advice for new HU4K volunteers?

Advice would be to go with the flow, encourage and do what you feel is right for the individual child. They are all so different and whatever you do must be better than nothing. Even the best readers need practise reading out loud.

Why Networking Exchanges are Important

Volunteer Network Exchanges (VNE) are a great way for our community of volunteers to come together and support one another. Some of the benefits of VNE's are:

- Benefit from a new perspective.
- Learn from a lived experience.
- Add value to your volunteering experience through learning.
- Learn and share ideas together over a morning tea or cuppa.
- Share similar experiences with fellow volunteers who may have similar experiences as you.
- Reach out to other volunteer's experiences to help support or solve problems.
- Forging connections and building relationships with other volunteers.

Volunteer Network Exchanges have many benefits, and those listed above are just a few. Forging connections and building relationships with others helps to drive the incredible organisation we are all part of.

"A book is like a garden carried in the pocket." **Chinese Proverb**



Dog joke: Q: Why did the dog sit in the shade? A: Because they didn't want to be a hot dog!

Garden joke: Q. Why do you put bulbs in the ground? A. So the worms can see!

Families take on many forms

A study conducted in the UK in 1987 revealed how schools were organised around the assumption that the nuclear family is the "norm". Recent research conducted in Australia shows that little has changed in the past 40 years. In Australia 28% of children under 14 have parents who are separated.

A child may have a mother and father, or perhaps a mother, or a father as single parents, or step parents and possibly step siblings. There may be two mothers, or two fathers. Perhaps a child may be in foster care or adopted.

Whatever a child's family looks like, there is no "norm". But the greatest importance is to have a loving and supportive environment for every child.

Ref: Desmarchelier, R., Bryce, I., & Cantrell, K. (2024). Conflict, communication, and the 'good' parent construct: separated parents' experiences with Australian schools. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 1–20.

VOLUNTEERING IS A
WORK OF HEART

♥ THANKS FOR ALL THAT YOU DO! ♥



Kindness

Each year in the UK, an Oxford University Press survey asks over 6000 children ages 6 – 14 what their chosen word for "Children's Word of the Year" might be (2024).

61% of the children surveyed chose "**kindness**" as their preferred word. A very encouraging word indeed.

Art and Science

A recent article proposed a collaboration between scientists and authors of children's books to showcase a greater diversity of Australian wildlife. Many, although not all books do feature animals from the northern hemisphere such as squirrels, robins, honeybees and bears.

Australia does have some firm favourites on many book shelves such as Possum Magic, Diary of a Wombat and Snugglepot and Cuddlepie.

It was pointed out that there are inaccuracies in children's literature across the world, for example whales don't blow water out of their blowholes. The errors are important to correct as this basic scientific literacy does shape children's early developing understanding of the scientific world.

The authors of the article suggested that with collaboration between scientists and authors, the scientists could provide accurate biology giving richness to the artistic process.

Ref: <https://theconversation.com/heres-why-more-australian-scientists-should-team-up-with-authors-on-books-about-animals>