



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

**LAUNCH OF THE SMITH FAMILY'S
2018 CHRISTMAS APPEAL**

Thursday 22 November, 2018

Mr Anton Leschen, General Manager Victoria, The Smith Family

Ms Rachel Smith, Principal of St Joseph's Primary School

Ladies and gentlemen

Boys and girls

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to their Elders past and present and to any Elders here with us this morning.

I am delighted to join you to launch The Smith Family's 2018 Christmas Appeal.

Eighteen years as a judge in the Family Court of Australia taught me what I am sure everyone in this room knows only too well.

This time of year – a time when families and friends gather for fellowship, food, fun and gift exchanges, a time of joy and togetherness – can be such a painful period for those who are lonely, struggling financially or experiencing difficulties in their lives.

Although The Smith Family works every day of the year to break the cycle of poverty for children, the Christmas Appeal is linked directly to its foundation in 1922. To Christmas Eve. When five businessmen delivered toys and sweet treats to an orphanage in Sydney.

And, since then, The Smith Family has improved the lives of disadvantaged children – and their families – for almost a century worth of Christmases, as well as all year around.

This year, The Smith Family is calling on Australians to donate new toys and books for the 25,000 children on its sponsorship program. Over 5,000 packs will be distributed in Victoria alone.

These gifts will be delivered to households by a network of volunteers, and through the wonderful Delivery Day extravaganza at the Royal Melbourne Showgrounds.

I can vouch for the generosity and goodwill of donors and volunteers when it comes to these Christmas gifts.

Tony and I were fortunate enough last year to volunteer as toy and book packers. The toys and books donated were first class. They were age-appropriately and generously packed. And we found ourselves amidst an army of happy volunteers.

This year, The Smith Family Christmas Appeal aims to raise \$3.8 million nationally, to provide learning programs to around 9,000 children and young people.

Not all children get an equal start in life. And the education programs run by The Smith Family – spanning mentoring, literacy, numeracy and technology – offer much needed support to the 1.1 million Australian children and young people growing up in poverty.

These programs help children to catch up, and keep up, when life throws difficult circumstances at them. They help them to build skills, knowledge, motivation, self-belief and a network of positive relationships.

I take heart from the fact that Victorians are generous. I have the privilege of seeing their generosity every day, in every corner of our State. I thank all those who will contribute to these important programs.

I am pleased for the opportunity to thank the Chair and Board members for the time, skill and vision that they contribute.

Thank you too to Anton Leschen and the staff at The Smith Family for all that they offer through their hard work and commitment.

And as for the volunteers, they give freely of their time and resources. They are generous-spirited and are setting an invaluable example to those around them. In fact, without the 8,000 volunteers, The Smith Family simply could not achieve all that it does for the children of Australia.

Thank you for all that you do to nurture and support our children.

You are making Victoria a stronger State, and securing a brighter future for *all* Victorians.