



For immediate release
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Giant Pink Pigs ... they might not fly but they love to drive!

If you spot an enormous pink pig cruising the streets of your town in September, don't be alarmed! It's a sign that it's time to support children with life-threatening illnesses by giving to the Piggy Bank Appeal, the biggest annual fundraiser for Very Special Kids.

Very Special Kids provides much needed assistance to children with life-threatening illnesses and their families. When a child is diagnosed with such a condition, it turns their family's world upside down. That's why Very Special Kids provides not only respite and end-of-life care for very sick children, but also counselling, bereavement and other support services for their parents and siblings.

The 2008 Piggy Bank Appeal will run from 5 to 28 September. Community groups, businesses and whole towns are set to unite, holding fundraising events at pre-arranged piggy trail stops throughout Melbourne and regional Victoria. Many events are centred around a visit from one of the five giant piggy banks: Percy, Penelope, Patrick, Princess and George. Each piggy bank will be towed on a different path across the state, covering more than 5,000km with a team of volunteers collecting donations, selling merchandise, and raising awareness for Very Special Kids.

"Most of us had a piggy bank or money box as a child to save for something really special," explains Very Special Kids CEO, David Agnew. "The Piggy Bank Appeal is inspired by those piggy banks we all remember from our childhood, only the very special thing we need your help saving for is providing vital support to families of very special kids.

"It costs \$4 million to provide services for the more than 800 families across Victoria who depend upon us. We need Victoria's help to raise more than \$1 million during this year's Appeal to meet the growing demand for our services. When you see one of our giant piggy banks around town, I urge you to please give generously."

Very Special Kids is thrilled to welcome Metricon as a new Major Partner of the Appeal. Metricon is building a 'Very Special Home' in Shepparton that will go under the hammer on Saturday 4 October, with profit from the auction going to the Appeal. Metricon hopes to raise in excess of \$100,000 with the sale of this home - enough to provide 20 families with a year of support services from Very Special Kids.

There are several ways people can help improve the quality of life of a family caring for a seriously ill child. Donations can be made at any Commonwealth Bank or HBA branch or anywhere you see one of the bright pink piggy banks. A range of cute piggy merchandise will also be available at all Tattersall's Outlets, Tatts Pokies Venues and Metricon display centres.

Please contact Very Special Kids on (03) 9804 6222 to find out more or head to the website - www.piggybankappeal.org.au to pick up some merchandise, make a donation or find an event happening near you!

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To arrange an interview with a family who receive support from Very Special Kids, or for more information on the Piggy Bank Appeal please contact Peta Levett on 03 9804 6243, 0417 070 630 or email plevett@vsk.org.au

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MORE ABOUT VERY SPECIAL KIDS

While we can't change the amount of time very special children are with us, there's a lot we can do to improve the quality of that time for the child and their family.



Very Special Kids is proud to have the Gaythorpe family as this year's Family Face of the Piggy Bank Appeal. Six year old Matthew has a rare genetic condition called Autosomal Recessive Polycystic Kidney Disease, which damages his liver and causes his kidneys to fill with cysts. He also suffers from extremely high blood pressure, nephrogenic diabetes insipidus (meaning his kidneys can't concentrate urine) and narcolepsy (an uncontrollable need to sleep which strikes unexpectedly).

For families like the Gaythorpes, Very Special Kids makes one of life's most heartbreaking ordeals that little bit more manageable. Children with life-threatening illnesses often have complex medical needs and caring for them can be exhausting for parents, both physically and emotionally.

Very Special Kids ensures these families don't have to face that challenge alone. They can access its services from the time their child is diagnosed, through to recovery or bereavement - free-of-charge and for as long as they need to. Currently, over 800 families across Victoria rely on Very Special Kids.

Very Special Kids' support services include:

- *Very Special Kids House* - a children's hospice offering respite, transition and end-of-life care. Designed to feel just like a big family home, parents can leave their children at the *House* knowing that they will receive specialist nursing care. It's Victoria's only, and Australia's first, children's hospice.
- Counselling, parent groups and retreats as well as bereavement support for the parents of seriously ill children.
- Sibling days and sleepover weekends for children who have a brother or sister with a life-threatening illness or who are coming to terms with the death of their sibling.
- In-home assistance from specially trained Family Support Volunteers who also provide a familiar face for children by visiting them in hospital or at *Very Special Kids House*, giving families a much-needed break.
- Special family days and camps that give families the opportunity to take time out and meet other families who understand the roller coaster of life with a seriously ill child.

To ensure these services are accessible to Victorian families across the state, Very Special Kids' offices are located in Malvern (where the head office and *Very Special Kids House* is located), Ballarat, Brunswick, Frankston, Torquay, Shepparton and Traralgon.

Very Special Kids could not exist without the generosity of the community who it depends on for 80% of its funding.

www.piggybankappeal.org.au

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