

# MEDIA RELEASE

## Grassroots sport under pressure as Bunnings backs volunteer coaches with new initiative



**Bunnings launches Coaching Legends to recognise the 265,600<sup>1</sup> Kiwi volunteer coaches doing the mahi**

With volunteer numbers down 28 per cent in grassroots clubs since 2018<sup>2</sup>, fewer coaches are carrying more of the load, often dedicating upwards of 12 hours a week<sup>3</sup>.

New research commissioned by Bunnings shows volunteer coaches are juggling a range of responsibilities - from early morning trainings to weekend games - highlighting the growing pressure on those keeping grassroots sport alive.

In response, Bunnings has launched **Coaching Legends**, a national initiative recognising and celebrating the contribution of volunteer coaches, as part of its ongoing commitment to supporting community sport across New Zealand.

Backed by Kiwi sporting legends **Shaun Johnson, Portia Woodman-Wickliffe, Francis de Vries, Amelia Kerr** and **Brook Ruscoe**, all of whom have benefitted from the support of volunteer coaches during their careers.

For decorated rugby union player, Portia Woodman-Wickliffe, coaches have an impact that goes far beyond sport.

“For so many of us, volunteer coaches are the people who spark that first love of the game - guiding you, challenging you, and giving you the confidence to keep going. They don’t do it for recognition or reward; they do it because they genuinely care.



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"I wouldn't be where I am today without some key coaches who gave their time to support and believe in me, and I know that's the same for so many young Kiwis coming through. Their impact can shape not just the player you become, but the person you grow into," said Woodman-Wickliffe.

With 86% of the grassroots sport club community saying volunteer coaches' impact is overlooked<sup>3</sup>, recognition has never been more important.

Bunnings Coaching Legends is designed to address this - shining a light on and rewarding the coaches who give so much.

From today, Kiwis across the country can nominate a volunteer coach in their community, giving them the chance to be recognised. Throughout the year, Bunnings will celebrate coaches with prizes that support both the individual and their club - from professional athlete and coach-led clinics that build capability, to practical coaches' kits.

Five exceptional volunteer coaches will be selected to attend the **ISPS Handa Halberg Awards** in February alongside New Zealand's top sporting stars, with the Bunnings Coaching Legend of the Year announced the same day and awarded \$25,000 of Bunnings products and materials for their club.

Sport NZ is supportive of the new initiative and the opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of volunteer coaches.

Sport NZ Sport Development Lead – Coaching, Andy Rogers said: "Every day, volunteer coaches give their time to make a difference in the lives of young people. At Sport NZ, we see firsthand the vital role they play in supporting participation, helping young people build life skills and contributing positively to their overall wellbeing. Sport NZ is committed to supporting these volunteers and it is great to see Bunnings get onboard too."

Bunnings New Zealand General Manager, Melissa Haines said, "We're proud to be backing these legends who are running training sessions, organising drills, cheering from the sidelines, and making sure everyone feels welcome and included. That spirit is something we really value at Bunnings, where we encourage our team to give things a go and support one another to be their best.

"Through Coaching Legends, we're looking forward to recognising these individuals and the important role they play in strengthening grassroots communities, and hope that we can help encourage more New Zealanders to put their hand up and get involved," said Haines.

## Know a Coaching Legend?

Do you know a volunteer coach who's a true legend in your community, club or team? Head to [www.bunnings.co.nz/coachinglegends](http://www.bunnings.co.nz/coachinglegends) to nominate a Coaching Legend and give them and your club the chance to be rewarded with legendary prizes up for grabs every week. Nominations open on 22 June 2026.

For more information on Bunnings Coaching Legends, visit: [www.bunnings.co.nz/coachinglegends](http://www.bunnings.co.nz/coachinglegends)

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## Notes to editor:

### Prizes:

- **Each week**, five volunteer coaches will be rewarded with a Bunnings Coaching Legends kit, featuring limited-edition Bunnings coach merch including a cap, bag, drink bottle, whistle and lanyard, gym towel and first aid kit as well as a \$250 Bunnings gift card for them and \$250 Bunnings gift card for their club.



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- **Each month**, one standout volunteer coach will win a money-can't-buy experience, with a high-performance sporting professional joining them and their team for a training session - sharing skills, inspiration and confidence.
- **And each year**, five volunteer coaches from across Aotearoa will receive \$5,000 of Bunnings products for their club and be invited to attend the ISPS Handa Halberg Awards, where they'll join some of New Zealand's most celebrated sporting figures. On the same day, one of these finalists will be named Bunnings Coaching Legend of the Year, taking home a further \$25,000 of Bunnings product for their club.

## References:

1. Honoco nationwide survey conducted in June 2026, commissioned by Bunnings. Based on a nationally representative sample size of 1,569 New Zealanders (18 years and over).
2. Stronger Communities Through Sport report from AUT and New Zealand Amateur Sport Association <https://cdnc.heyzine.com/files/uploaded/v3/fd05d3ce9ffa19eade428ffa6209f22e5e22aa48.pdf>
3. Honoco nationwide survey June 2026, commissioned by Bunnings.

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## About Bunnings NZ

Bunnings is a leading retailer of home and lifestyle products for consumer and commercial customers in Australia and New Zealand. We are a major supplier to project builders, commercial tradespeople and the housing industry. Our store network in New Zealand is made up of 51 locations, comprising Bunnings Warehouses, smaller format stores and trade centres. This physical network is supported by a growing e-commerce ecosystem and supply chain network. Bunnings employs more than 5,000 team members across the country.

We are committed to giving back to the communities in which we live and operate. Between July 2024 and June 2025, Bunnings was involved in more than 6,800 community activities and contributed \$2.6 million to community organisations and initiatives nationwide.

Over the past five years, Bunnings has contributed more than \$1.62 million to grassroots sport initiatives, including Bunnings Rugby Assist (Rugby) and Home Ground Heroes (Touch).

Building on this commitment, Bunnings is launching Coaching Legends - a programme that celebrates the everyday legends of community sport - volunteer coaches - who make a meaningful difference to players, clubs and communities across Aotearoa.

