

# How George has turned 206,000 bottles and cans into braille books for kids

By [Chloe Coleman](#)

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George Brennan with a few of his customised bins. Picture by Chloe Coleman

When George Brennan first heard about Braille House, a charity that converts children's books into braille, he couldn't go on without doing something to help.

Over the past two years, the Rutherford man has taken more than 206,000 bottles and cans to Return and Earn, raising \$20,600 for Braille House in the process.

A former highway patrol sergeant, Mr Brennan has volunteered his own time and money to raise the incredible sum.

His Return and Earn operation has grown and grown over the two years, with 40 council sized wheelie bins that he has customised out at homes and businesses across the city.

When someone calls to let Mr Brennan know their bin is full, he collects it and pours the bottles and cans into his custom-made trailer, which features a bin lift to tip out the heavy loads.



George Brennan demonstrating how the bottles and cans get into the trailer. Picture by Chloe Coleman

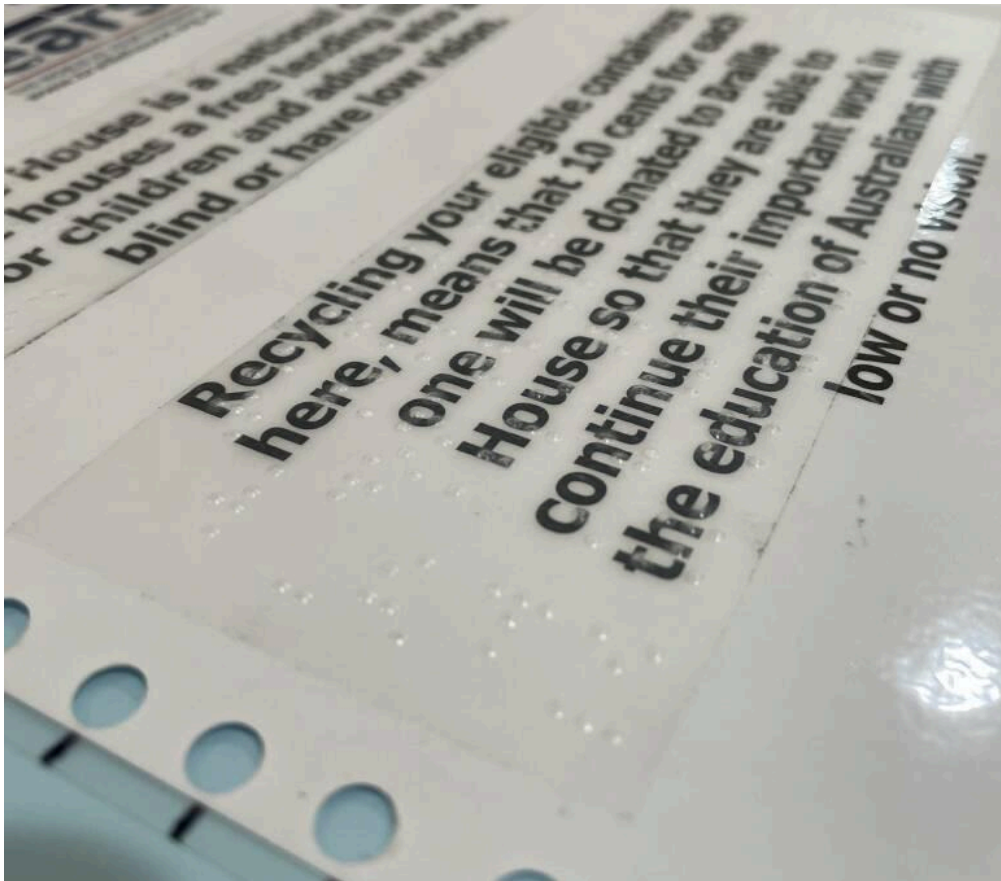
Mr Brennan said originally he used return and earn money to purchase supplies for his 11 grandchildren, but after hearing about Braille House he made the switch to fundraising.

"It sort of rolled from there, so I had one, my bin, and then a bloke across the road he saw, so I put a bin over at his place, and then another bin, and then I had to find more wheelie bins... and then it just grew and grew," he said.

"I've got probably 40 bins out there."

When *The Mercury* visited, Mr Brennan had just picked up two new customers; one residential and the other Rutherford Ambulance Station. Braille House is an Australian not-for-profit free lending library which loans out Braille and Moon type books to people who are blind or have low vision. It relies on donations to continue producing and teaching Braille.

To convert the books, Braille House places thick, clear stickers over the writing on books which has the words in Braille.



An example of braille from Braille House placed over typed text.

For children who are learning to read, this allows them to read the Braille at the same time as an adult who is reading the text aloud.

Mr Brennan used to have to travel to Newcastle to donate such a large quantity of bottles and cans, but can now donate them in Maitland since the opening of the Rutherford [bulk depot](#) earlier this year.

Mr Brennan said it's so important for children who are blind or have low vision to have access to reading materials.

"One can close your eyes and try to imagine what it's like to be blind, but that's only a moment, it's not living it, and for these kids to be able to read, that's where they're learning, that's their knowledge and they can carry on a job," he said.

"This wouldn't be successful without the people donating and helping, and I've got lots of people doing little things for me."