

## **Community-run early learning centres welcome Early Years Education and Care Centres Funding Agreement**

Families and staff from Elwood Children's Centre, Eildon Road Childcare & Kindergarten (St Kilda) and The Avenue Children's Centre & Kindergarten (Balaclava) today welcomed the Victorian Government's investment of up to \$12.6 million to redevelop the community-run early learning centres.

Through the Building Blocks initiative, the City of Port Phillip will partner with the Victorian Government to future-proof six much-loved early years education and care centres in the municipality.

Eildon Road Childcare & Kindergarten Committee President Caroline Thornton said the Committees of the three centres have worked tirelessly during the past 11 months to stop the sale of their buildings.

"Our centres have campaigned to keep our services operating since December last year, when Councillors voted unanimously to commence the proposal to sell process for our buildings.

"As key drivers of the funding partnership between the City of Port Phillip and the Victorian Government, we are really pleased to welcome this announcement.

"The funding means our centres and three others in the municipality will be redeveloped or renovated, which will allow our experienced and dedicated staff to continue to provide high quality early learning education and care to local families and the Port Phillip community.

"This will help parents, especially mothers to be a part of the workforce or study which is critical."

The Avenue Children's Centre & Kindergarten Committee President Louise Hird said the partnership will ensure the centres requiring significant renovation or replacement will be made fit-for-purpose and accessible for generations to come at the same locations.

"We know how important the early years are in setting our kids up for the future. Collectively, our three centres provide care and education for more than 200 local children each year, helping parents balance care-giving and work, and fostering connection and community among families.

"This partnership means thousands more families and children will be able to access quality, affordable early learning services for generations to come."



Elwood Children's Centre Committee President Claire Byrne thanked the local community for its unwavering support of our Save Our Centres campaign.

"We also couldn't have achieved this outcome without the strong support and encouragement from Martin Foley MP, Josh Burns MP and Nina Taylor MP and their dedicated teams who really helped us keep going when we felt that the challenge was too great.

"We thank the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep Ingrid Stitt and staff at the Department of Education and Training and the Victorian Schools Building Authority for recognising the need to retain and invest in community-run early learning centres like ours and unlocking significant funds to ensure our local children thrive, save families money and there is support women to return to work."

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