

NEWS RELEASE



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NINETY NEW CHILDREN'S PLACES IN ELWOOD

The City of Port Phillip awarded the contract for the Elwood Family and Children's Services Hub, on the grounds of Elwood Primary School at this week's council meeting (September 25). Andeco Construction Group will begin work on the hub within four weeks and it is expected to be ready for operation in mid-2007.

"This is a significant milestone and achievement for the community in Elwood," said Deputy Mayor and local Ormond ward councillor, Janet Cribbes.

"This will not only save the 35 places that would have been lost due to the imminent closure of the Scott Street Children's Centre but it will add new long-day care places. It will help in alleviating the general shortage of child care places. This is a creative flexible and quick solution to the situation confronting Elwood parents."

The hub will offer 90 long-day care and kindergarten places. The balance between long-day care places and sessional kindergarten places will be determined by the council on October 2. The recommendation to be considered by the strategy and policy review committee advocates 60 long-day care places and 30 sessional kindergarten places.

If this recommendation were to be adopted, 26 sessional kindergarten places lost to Elwood by the closure of St Bede's Kindergarten, would be retained, and another four added to it. Twenty of these kindergarten places shifted to West St Kilda Children's Centre in January and, if the recommendation to provide 30 sessional kindergarten places at the Elwood Hub is followed, this will allow 20 additional long day care places to be created at West St Kilda Children's Centre.

Cr Cribbes said that the Elwood hub would centre establish a continuity of care from the time kids are born.

"On the one site, Elwood kids can be checked out by maternal and child health nurses, enjoy occasional or long day care, attend kindergarten and be seen by other specialist services such as a speech therapist, if required. Having a range of early years services on the one site will provide choice and stability for children and their families, says Cr Cribbes.

"The children at the Elwood hub will benefit from this integrated service approach," added Cr Cribbes. "This is the first centre of its kind anywhere in Port Phillip," said Cr Cribbes.

"A big factor of planning the centre was the importance of offering parents a choice about the sort of care and education they want for their children.

“This centre establishes a continuity of care from the time kids are born. On the one site, they can be checked out by maternal and child health nurses, enjoy occasional or long day care, attend kindergarten and be seen by a speech therapist, if required. When they start primary school, it’s just a matter of going in a different gate. When they go to high school, they simply go next door to Elwood College.

“In a world where change and uncertainty are the norm, this hub will offer Elwood children unparalleled stability in care and education from birth to 18 years of age.”

To obtain the land for the centre, the council swapped sections of Mitford Street (between Shelley Street and Poets Grove) and Shelley Street (between Mitford Street and the Elwood Canal) for the easterly corner of the Elwood Primary School grounds, fronting onto Poets Grove. With the road enclosed, children will no longer need teacher supervision to cross to their sports oval.

The council is putting \$2 million toward the hub which also received \$500,000 from the Department of Human Services in funding.

A grant of \$237,750 from the Department of Education will assist Elwood Primary in fencing, landscaping, removing the road surface, and building new parking bays, toilets and all weather playing surface on what is currently Shelley Street. The Scott Street Children’s Centre is donating \$100,000 towards the playground and environmental initiatives such as water saving devices.

“There have been many hurdles to jump in the last 3 years or so,” said Cr Cribbes. “But this is a great example of partnership between local and state government as well as the community.

“The parents of Elwood have been key partners throughout this process, making a terrific contribution reflected in the range of services that the hub will offer.”

In addition to the awarding the contract of the Elwood hub, the council has reviewed costings for renovations to the Ada Mary A’Beckett Children’s Centre in Port Melbourne which are designed to meet that the State Government legislative requirements increasing the space allocated per child. The tender will be put out shortly. Redevelopment of the Ada Mary A’Beckett Children’s Centre will maintain 16 sixteen places which would otherwise have been lost due to the changes and create an extra 28.

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