



Stephanie Mumford with Mason, 2, Alannah Nicholson with Ruby, 18 months, Jessica McGillivray with Ellie, 2.
Picture: David Smith

Free playgroups such as Caroline Chisholm Play and Learn tackle Melton teen mum isolation

Ami Humpage, Melton Leader

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STRUGGLING to cope with isolation and judgment, teenage mothers in Melton are finding the support they need from their peers in playgroups.

Data from the Victorian Child and Adolescent Monitoring System shows the number of teenage girls aged 15-19 giving birth in Melton jumped from 37 in 2007 to 54 in 2011.

And last year 33 teen mums gave birth of the 900 babies born at Bacchus March and Melton Regional Hospital.

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But groups like the free [Caroline Chisholm](#) Play and Learn playgroup are helping mothers and mothers to be aged 16-25 to get out of the house and support each other.

Stephanie Mumford, 20, was 18 and studying year 12 at Staughton College when she found out she was pregnant with now two-year-old son Mason.

She said she was lucky she was able to finish school and had the support of her now fiance and family.

But she said without the playgroup she would be stuck at home.

“Playgroup is great for both Mason and I as it gets us out of the house and socialising,” Ms Mumford said.



Stephanie Mumford, 2, Alannah Nicholson with Ruby, 18 months, and Jessica McGillivray with Ellie, 2. Picture: David Smith.

Single mum Jessica McGillivray, 18, was only 15 when she fell pregnant with her now two-year-old daughter Ellie.

She said from the very beginning the healthy mums and bubs group really helped her, but as Ellie got older and she moved to other groups she found some people could be judgmental.

“The best thing about the young mums group is we are all the same, we don’t feel like idiots and we learn from each other.”

Alannah Nicholson, 19, agreed.

She was 17 when she fell pregnant with now 18-month-old Ruby.

For her the hardest thing was not only raising a child, but watching her friends walk away.

“I have great family and my partner and his family but this group has really helped us socially,” she said.

[Caroline Chisholm Society](#) Family Support Case manager Daya Adelan said demand for groups like this was rising and the aim was to address issues of isolation for young mothers.

She said assistance from [Melton Council](#) and [Playgroup Victoria](#) helped keep the service free.

The playgroup meets every Wednesday from 10.30am to 12.30pm at 2 Westmelton Drive, Melton West. Details: 9361 7000.

[Djerriwarrh Health Services](#) also runs a Healthy Mother’s, Healthy Babies Program as well as the Moorabool Young Parents Group and Melton Parent and Baby groups.

Details: 5367 2000 or [Djerriwarrh’s website here](#)