



Rosie Dymus, left, and Helen Cooney, with Strathmore twins Harper and Freya, 4, Tobias, 3, and Edward 11 months, from Ascot Vale. Picture: Yuri Kouzmin.

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Caroline Chisholm Society in Moonee Ponds needs money to expand services

Linh Ly, Moonee Valley Leader

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VULNERABLE mothers are in desperate need of an Essendon hub, family support workers say.

[Caroline Chisholm Society](#), a pregnancy and family support organisation, needs money to fit-out its new base at 744 Mt Alexander Rd to house its operations as well as playgroups, counselling services and emergency relief.

Society chief executive Helen Cooney said the “demand for our services always outstrips our capacity”, heightening the need to fast-track its facility.

“It doesn't matter how many appointments we offer, we always have a waiting list,” Ms Cooney said.

“That demand will keep increasing (because) the growth in the western suburbs is extraordinary.”

The organisation, which supports women during and after pregnancies, bought the Mt Alexander Rd site after it outgrew its former Park St house in Moonee Ponds.

It is fundraising to fit-out its new headquarters and the community has so far donated more than \$280,000, but more is needed.

Caroline Chisholm Society sees about 1500 to 2000 families each year while it rents at Shuter St, helping with clients mental health, depression, peri-natal, family violence and homelessness.

The society planned to renovate its new building for a stand-alone service, but is now pursuing a facility with space for playgroups, volunteering, counsellors and social workers.

“We would like to be able to offer space for services that wish to have counselling or emergency relief,” Ms Cooney (pictured) said.

Among the organisations keen to move in is Playgroup Victoria, with Moonee Valley co-ordinator Rosie Dymus saying they could establish supported playgroups with Caroline Chisholm Society clients.

“If you get a group of mums who are in crisis, it gets them into stability and gets them to meet other mums in similar situations as them,” Ms Dymus said.

“It would certainly make a huge difference (to be able to) talk to someone next to you that is experiencing the same things as yourself.

“The beauty of playgroups is it's not just about the kids so it connects both generations.”

To donate go to carolinechisholmsociety.com.au