



Caroline Chisholm Society's Moonee Ponds lease runs out in 12 months. Picture: supplied.  
Caroline Chisholm Society's Moonee Ponds lease runs out in 12 months. Picture: supplied.

# Caroline Chisholm Society for disadvantaged mothers needs \$950K for new Essendon hub

Linh Ly, Moonee Valley Leader

February 25, 2015 12:00am

AN ORGANISATION that has helped vulnerable and disadvantaged mothers in Moonee Valley for almost 46 years may be forced out if it cannot secure state funding.

Caroline Chisholm Society chief executive Helen Cooney said the organisation was desperate to build an integrated hub on land it bought in Essendon before its Moonee Ponds lease runs out in 12 months.

The society applied for money from the State Government last year but was told it couldn't be approved in the lead-up to an election.

**TELL US: Has this organisation helped you or someone you know? Post your comments below.**

"We have brought to the project \$1 million worth of land and our community in Moonee Valley has raised more than \$300,000, but we need the \$950,000 for it to go ahead," Ms Cooney said.

Among the features of the proposed two-storey building is a reception area, consultation rooms, volunteer and fundraising space, meeting rooms, group space, accessible toilets and a kitchenette.

The plan includes hosting other services such as playgroups, psychologists, counsellors and other emergency relief.

"If we were located in only Shepparton and Caroline Springs (their other branches), people would not be able to get to us easily for emergency relief," Ms Cooney said.

The organisation, which cares for women during and after pregnancy, helps up to 2000 clients a year who face issues such as family violence, homelessness and mental health problems.

"People have literally come to us for formula or a bassinet as soon as they leave hospital because they don't have anything else," Ms Cooney said.

Essendon state Labor MP Danny Pearson said he acknowledged the importance of keeping the society local, but funding decisions would be made as part of the State Budget process.

Ms Cooney said plans for the centre had been approved and construction could begin within three months of a funding guarantee, but any delays put the project in jeopardy.

Moonee Valley Mayor Narelle Sharpe said the council, which has provided grants and donations to the organisation, would send a letter of support for the application to the State Government.

"While some parts of the municipality are quite affluent, there are many people in the community who need a lot of help, particularly younger mothers," Cr Sharpe said.