

Caroline Chisholm Society today called on political parties to commit to grants for community owned infrastructure. The local women's service has been raising funds for its new office for over 2 years. Its Chief Executive Officer, Helen Cooney said "The people of Moonee Valley have raised over \$300,000 for the project and they deserve support from the State government to realize their vision for an integrated service hub in Essendon".

Ms Cooney also said "Previous governments have run community infrastructure funds but they rarely focus on areas of ageing infrastructure, despite growth from apartments and public transport lines bringing people into Moonee Valley. Caroline Chisholm for example receives large numbers of clients who come on the Broadmeadows train line, and the local growth will increase the number of local women experiencing mental health issues, homelessness and family violence.

We can see the growth in Moonee Valley from the apartments going up, but current grants don't often acknowledge it. After sale, the homes around our office are disappearing and 4 to 5 stories are going up in their place. Someone is receiving income and taxes as a result. We can think of a great way to spend those funds – infrastructure grants so that we ensure a cohesive community for those new residents.

Reflecting on why the Caroline Chisholm Society needs the funds, Ms Cooney said "It's over 10 years since the last review of how much the Victorian Government funds child and family services that prevent children from entering the expensive homelessness and child protection system. That is a large income source and pays for staff to visit mums at home during early parenting. Vulnerable Victorians have more complex issues, our staff have received a well overdue increase to their wages, the funding hasn't kept up with CPI and we focus on service provision. So, as a result, our buildings are no longer suited to our work.

In its newsletter, the Society asked the citizens of Moonee Valley to consider the following issues when they vote:

- **ON INFRASTRUCTURE:** It's over 10 years since the last review of funding for child and family services. Vulnerable Victorians have more complex issues, our staff have received a well overdue increase to their wages, the funding hasn't kept up with CPI and our buildings are no longer suited to our work. Will they fund community-owned infrastructure?
- **ON COMMUNITY SECTOR REFORM:** Women seeking help during and after pregnancy are facing homelessness, family violence & mental health issues. Demand for 'helping' services like that prevent engagement with 'fixing' services like Child Protection. Sadly, more and more children are being placed into state care and that's the most costly, most invasive, and least effective way of dealing with their issues. Will they provide the needed leadership to prevent the removal of children from their mothers? Will they continue to lead reform through 'Services Connect'?
- **ON PREGNANCY:** Women choose to continue their pregnancies in some of life's most challenging circumstances. Mothers need help to keep their unborn children in safe and nurturing environments, and to avoid stress. Will they extend the Cradle to Kinder Program across the state?