



Caroline Chisholm Society seeks help to stay in Moonee Valley

MARCH 28.2014 10:20 AM

BY SUE HEWITT

A leading local charity has launched the “Keep Caroline Chisholm in Moonee Valley” campaign to raise money for a new \$1.6 million headquarters for its pregnancy and family-support service.

The Caroline Chisholm Society was in leased premises and needed \$550,000 to reach its goal for a new premises and a permanent Moonee Valley base, according to chief executive Helen Cooney.

“Caroline Chisholm has been supporting mothers during and after pregnancy from an old house in Moonee Valley [which has now been sold] for over 40 years,” she said.

“Given the need for public transport by our clients, we’re really keen to stay but we need help to achieve that.”

She said the charity wanted to renovate the former Precision Mowers shop at 977 Mount Alexander Road, Essendon, into a two-storey facility with secure and private office space for counsellors and caseworkers to meet clients and a large multi-functional space for social support groups, cooking classes, volunteering and storage, sorting and cleaning of new and pre-loved goods. It would also have a “warm and welcoming” reception with space for volunteer administrators that it would offer to share with other community organisations.

After raising more than \$1 million through the sale of its Park Street, Moonee Ponds, premises, donations and other fund-raising, Caroline Chisholm is seeking help from locals, philanthropists and government to gain the \$550,000 needed to reach its \$1.6 million target.

“Philanthropic supporters are being asked to match significant donations committed by other donors, while the state government is asked to finish its review of community support fund grants so that the society can apply,” she said.

Ms Cooney also called on members of the community to ask their local candidates for the state election if they were planning to offer help to locally embedded organisations with community infrastructure.

“We offer support from the moment a woman learns of her pregnancy to the time her youngest child goes to school,” she said.

She said the society helped up to 2000 women a year offering new and pre-loved baby and maternity goods, counselling and support to empower families, and ongoing casework to support good parenting while mothers were at risk of or facing stress from factors including homelessness, family violence and mental health issues.