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To: Recipients of Weekly CEO Email (Staff and Volunteers of CCS)
From: president@caroline.org.au
Subject: A fond farewell to Helen Cooney
Content:

Friends,

In 2009, Helen Cooney joined Caroline Chisholm Society and quickly became our President. She started as our CEO in 2012. This year marks 50 years for the Society. For the last 10 of those years, Helen has been a transformational leader for the Society. In recent months, Helen has been working with the Board of the Society on finalising some key projects after having supported us to prepare our new strategy for the years ahead.

Helen has supported staff and volunteers to empower more people as they continue their pregnancies through some of life's most difficult circumstances. Since joining Caroline Chisholm Society, Helen has helped us help more pregnant women, new mothers and their families at three local community centres. In her time, the Society's income has increased significantly and, with a view to protecting the Society from the risk of a sharp change in income, Helen oversaw a substantial increase in the value of our assets.

While many of us know about her work in establishing the new office in Essendon and working on evidence-based and collaborative practice in Caroline Springs, her achievements in Shepparton are particularly notable. We now help families at over 600 appointments each year in the Goulburn Valley community, we are a registered and accredited service and have had regular innovative projects driven by the community for the community.

In Melbourne, including the growing community of Melton, Helen supported the team to help over 200 families each year with home visiting and 1000 appointments each year offering baby and maternity goods and other welfare support. Helen has also had a strong focus on professionalising the frameworks in which our workers operate, having most recently introduced a new client record system that will allow us to implement evidence-based practice and report on outcomes.

Throughout her time, Helen has changed what we do, but not who we are. She has remained true to the Society's values. In Melbourne's West, Helen is known for visiting local MPs to highlight the needs of pregnant women and their young children, speaking at schools about social justice in the context of strong values, and working with service clubs to meet the immediate needs of families. Helen can often be found lamenting the lack of public focus on how to prevent the removal of children from their families and prevent intergenerational disadvantage.

The Society has achieved its governance, financial and quality goals under her leadership.

In February last year, Helen supported the Society to adopt a new strategy. It includes a renewed focus on raising funds so we can help more mothers and their babies and toddlers, risk management in the context of increasing complex situations for families and quality practice especially in relation to pregnancy. Helen plans to take a well-deserved and much-needed rest. Helen has said to us:

Locations

Caroline Springs
1 Darebin Place
Caroline Springs VIC 3023
Phone 03 9361 7000

Moonee Valley
977 Mt Alexander Road
Essendon 30430
Phone 03 9361 7000

Goulburn Valley
15A Andrews Road
Shepparton VIC 3630
Phone 03 5821 0826

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“For 10 years, I’ve been fighting for the rights of pregnant women, their babies and toddlers. All the while, I was delivering services for families. Honestly, I need to rest.

I would welcome an opportunity to learn in a new organisation as I have here at Caroline Chisholm Society, to establish a micro business in executive coaching and to reengage in the writing of policy and strategy. I can’t do those things and continue to operate at the pace required of the CEO of a small but nationally significant charity.

This is the right time to think about the next part of the journey at Caroline Chisholm Society and I believe that journey requires new leadership. I know the Society was facing challenges when I arrived and I know it will flourish in my absence. I have no doubt that our incredibly talented and hardworking team will continue the outstanding work that has characterised the last 10 years. I’m enthusiastic about the future for you all and the families we serve.

I’ve put my heart and soul into this place and I’ll always treasure my time here. I look forward to continuing to support the work of the Society as we celebrate our 50 years together.”

Helen has also said that she would prefer that staff, volunteers and members were not asked to provide funds for a gift because she like many of you is a donor to the Society. She wants any money for the Society to go to it being a great place to work, an inspiring place to volunteer, and a welcoming place for those in need. If anyone would like to say thank you, she has asked that we encourage you to join the Friends of Caroline Chisholm Society and make a regular donation through the Lord Mayor’s Charitable fund at <http://lmcf.link/FCCS>.

The Board is mapping out a considered process so that next CEO can implement the Society’s revised strategy. The process will begin in the months ahead. I, like Helen, have no doubt that our incredibly talented and hardworking team will continue the outstanding work it does with pregnant mothers, babies and toddlers and their diverse families with the professionalism and warmth it displays now.

We look forward to joining you at one of two farewells, which are planned for March. If you’d like to join us, please RSVP for the afternoon tea here: www.trybooking.com/BARVS. If you’d like to join us at the evening farewell, please book here: www.trybooking.com/BARWB. Our team in Shepparton will surely gather for a cup of tea, and we will share details of that later.

On behalf of the Board,

Dr Michael Christie,
President
Caroline Chisholm Society

8 Feb 2019

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