

Media Statement from President of Caroline Chisholm Society

Transformational leader of local but nationally significant charity, Helen Cooney, is moving on.

This year marks 50 years for the Caroline Chisholm Society. For the last 10 years, Helen Cooney has given great leadership to the Society, first as a board member and President of the Society, and from 2012 as its Chief Executive Officer. The pregnancy and family support service is best known for giving out new and pre-loved baby and maternity goods and working to prevent homelessness and prevent the removal of children from their families.

Since joining Society, Helen's major achievements have included:

- Opening a new pregnancy and family support service hub at Essendon which makes receiving of goods more dignified for new mothers, and which is more welcoming for families, safer for staff and volunteers and more focussed on early intervention and collaborative practice.
- An innovative baby-bassinet-box project based on a Finnish model, which operates at the Goulburn Valley Pregnancy and Family Support Service. She also achieved unprecedented levels of funding for the service, which is now accredited.
- Implementing evidence-based outcome measures and an outcome framework for family services to support the prevention of removal of children from their families.
- Major upgrades to aging property, fleet and IT infrastructure and to the Society's approach to strategy, risk and reporting.

Throughout her time, Helen has changed what we do, but not who we are. She has remained true to the Society's values. Caroline Chisholm Society has achieved our governance, financial and quality goals under her leadership.

In February last year, the Society adopted 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, which should allow her to focus on her studies. Helen Cooney said, "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. I started a course last year, and I can't focus on it and give CCS what it needs. It's time to take a breath and think about what next."

The Board is mapping out a considered process so that the next CEO can implement the Society's revised strategy. The process will begin in the months ahead.

- To pass on good wishes to Helen or make an enquiry, please email secretary@caroline.org.au
- A letter from the President to the Society about Helen's departure is available at <https://caroline.org.au/team/helen-cooney/>

8 Feb 2019

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