

## MEDIA RELEASE

18 March 2021

### **New centres enhance Early Years education in Buloke Shire**

Charlton Kindergarten children, along with numerous local onlookers, took the unique opportunity to see the arrival of the modular sections of their new building and watch it take shape on the previously cleared site in Armstrong Street, Charlton. A huge crane, which hoisted the newly arrived building components, naturally caused much excitement, especially in the young people that these brand-new learning spaces have been designed for!

The day's action was ongoing from morning to late afternoon, as the back verandah area was guided to its permanent placement.

On November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 State Premier, Daniel Andrews visited Charlton and first announced a grant worth almost \$1.2million to redevelop Charlton's Early Years facility, designed to incorporate Kindergarten, Long Day Care and Maternal and Child Health. This announcement was made in conjunction with the imminent first roll out of 3-year-old funded Kindergarten in Victoria, starting in the Buloke Shire and five other Local Government Areas.

This Early Learning Facility Upgrade project was allocated \$825,746 through the Children's Facilities Capital Program, with an additional allocation of \$350,000.

The previous building had seen the early education of decades of Charlton children and had been removed from the site to accommodate the new facility. While holding a significant place in the community's affections, long-term effects of flooding and general wear and tear had caused irreparable damage to the structure, causing safety concerns.

Fast forward to term one, 2021, and Charlton Kindergarten has seen a successful first year of funded 3-year-old Kindergarten, having fully integrated with the 4-year-old funded Kindergarten program. The challenge of a temporary re-location to the Tennis Club in the interim has demonstrated the patience, resilience and flexibility of both children and Educators alike, as they and the wider community eagerly wait for their new building to be completed.

The Y Ballarat is excited to be part of the roll out of new early childhood education facilities taking place in the Buloke Shire.

The Y Ballarat manages a number of the kindergartens across the Buloke Shire Council and the start of this year has seen the opening of the brand-new facility in Wycheproof. The second early years facility in Charlton is on track to open in the first weeks of Term 2. The 5 day 'Circuit Breaker' COVID Lockdown in mid-February has resulted in only minimal delays to the original timing for the building to be used operationally.

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#### **THE Y BALLARAT**

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At the Wycheproof site, the prefabricated building from Fleetwood, Melbourne, provides the facilities for both independent kindergarten sessions as well as a long day care option. The Maternal Child Health Nurse is also co-located in the same building, creating a 'one stop shop' for families with young children. This is enhanced by the location of the facility on the site of the town's P-12 College.

The new centre in Wycheproof was built with a combination of community, council, state and federal government and Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) funds and was largely driven by the parent group of the Wycheproof Preschool Play Centre.

The Y Ballarat team at the Wycheproof service, has been thrilled to have the opportunity of working in a purpose-built new centre.

"To be in such a wonderful new site is very exciting, it's such a great opportunity for us to expand our educational program," said Narelle Bubb, Area Director for the Y Ballarat. "There's no doubt that this will enhance the children's learning experience, especially as we continue to introduce 15 hours of funded kindergarten for 3-year-old children as part of the state government's commitment to early years education. We're really looking forward to the children at Charlton also having this opportunity."

Ms Bubb also noted that the highly qualified staff who deliver the centre programs were keen to make them 'their own' reflecting the needs of the children and their local community.

The Y Ballarat Executive Manager of Children's Services, Vicki Dobson, highlighted how closely the work being done across the Buloke Shire Council in the early years space was connected with the values of the national Y Movement.

"We believe in the power of inspired young people – and it takes inspired communities and their leaders to help make that happen. There's no doubt that we are seeing this in the work done by the Buloke Shire Council and the communities of Wycheproof and Charlton," she said.

"At the Y Ballarat, our commitment to the movement is through our early years education focus – by creating the best possible experience for young children in their early education, we are providing them with the opportunity to become the leaders of the future. Our qualified educators are a true asset in the development of our programs, and they are able to do this even better when they are not focusing on things like maintenance and repairs to the buildings."

The Y Ballarat is now the largest Early Years Manager in Victoria, with 85 kindergartens and 4 long day care centres operating across the state in both regional and metropolitan areas. The Y is particularly experienced in working with regional and remote communities to ensure the program meets the unique needs of each local community.

For further details visit: [www.earlyyears.ymca.org.au](http://www.earlyyears.ymca.org.au).

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### **Photos**

Photos taken on the day by Charlton Preschool are also provided.  
A photo opportunity can be arranged if required.

### **Contact**

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