

Friday, 23 April 2021

TRANSFORMING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN SHEPPARTON

The Andrews Labor Government has today released the second stage of the Shepparton Education Plan after extensive stakeholder and community engagement to improve outcomes for children in Shepparton.

The *Shepparton Education Plan – Stage Two – Early Years* (Early Years Plan) focusses on the educational journey of children from birth to school. It proposes 17 actions to ensure local children have greater access to integrated, effective, and inclusive early childhood education and care services.

The Early Years Plan centres on strengthening inter-agency collaboration with families to support a child's progress through the early years, improving the transition from early childhood education and care into school, and ensuring all families understand the value and accessibility of early childhood education services in Shepparton.

A group of early years experts consulted local community groups around actions to improve outcomes for children in Shepparton. Around 17,000 people took part in the public consultation undertaken by the Victorian School Building Authority during 2018 to gain feedback on the early years stage of the broader Shepparton Education Plan.

The Early Years Plan includes the opening of an integrated early learning centre in the grounds of Mooroopna Primary School, built in partnership with Greater Shepparton City Council and the philanthropic Colman Foundation.

From this centre, families will be able to access high-quality early learning, including kindergarten, long day care, maternal health care, allied health and related services in safe and inclusive spaces.

The centre is based on the "Our Place" model developed by the Colman Foundation – an organisation that supports the achievement of improved social outcomes by placing education at the heart of a disadvantaged community.

The Early Years Plan is the second of four separate stages, including secondary education, primary education and tertiary education and skills that make up the Labor Government's Shepparton Education Plan.

While the new \$119 million facilities for Greater Shepparton Secondary College are the cornerstone of the first stage of the Shepparton Education Plan, the second stage delivers a high-quality kindergarten experience and readiness for school is known to be critical to setting up children for lifelong learning.

The Labor Government has invested more than \$140 million in the long-term Shepparton Education Plan – including the new Greater Shepparton Secondary College, and the Mooroopna Integrated Early Learning Centre.

For more information on the *Shepparton Education Plan – Stage Two – Early Years* visit:
www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/educationplansshepparton.aspx

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

"We know that transformational change is needed to ensure children in Shepparton get the best possible start in life and this new Early Years Plan will be critical in helping us get there."

"This is a long-term vision and will take careful planning to get right – but we'll get it done."

Quote attributable to Minister for Early Childhood Ingrid Stitt

"This plan is an important step forward in ensuring children in Shepparton get the support they need to thrive in their early years and as they transition to school and beyond."

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