

# Media Release

**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**  
Leader of the House  
Minister for Health  
Minister for Health Infrastructure  
Minister for Ambulance Services



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## FIRST LOOK AT WHITTLESEA'S NEW EARLY PARENTING CENTRE

New mums and dads in the City of Whittlesea and across the northern suburbs will get the specialised support they need to care for their little ones, close to home – with the second of 12 new and upgraded Early Parenting Centres to open its doors later this month.

Minister for Health Infrastructure Mary-Anne Thomas and the Member for Mill Park Lily D'Ambrosio today toured the new multi-million-dollar City of Whittlesea Early Parenting Centre in South Morang.

Designed to feel like a home away from home, the centre will support families with children up to four years of age, giving them the advice and care they need – like support with sleep and settling, feeding and extra care for babies and toddlers with additional needs.

Sleep and settling is one of the biggest challenges facing new parents, with around half of Victorian parents who use Early Parenting Centres reporting problems with their child's sleep. This can lead to post-natal depression, isolation and stress for parents and affect a child's behavioural, mental and physical development.

The new centre features 10 residential family units and four day-stay places, providing both short-term and longer residential stay programs to improve the health, wellbeing and developmental outcomes of children.

The residential family units are designed with flexibility in mind and support different family structures. Families can bring multiple children or accommodate an older sibling, grandparent, or other carer during their stay.

The purpose-built centre also includes kitchen and dining areas, playrooms and outdoor play areas, delivered in partnership with Mercy Health.

The 12 new and upgraded Early Parenting Centres are part of the Labor Government's \$148 million investment to expand our early parenting service network – and an \$18.9 million investment in the *Victorian Budget 2023/24* to deliver on our election commitments for a new centre in Northcote and an Aboriginal-led centre in Frankston.

Building on this work, this year's Budget also invested to increase the time newborns spend with maternal nurses, help mums struggling with breastfeeding and support new dads.

### **Quote attributable to Minister for Health Infrastructure Mary-Anne Thomas**

*"The birth of a new child is one the most precious moments for any parent - but it can also be a stressful and difficult time and this new centre will help hundreds of families in the northern suburbs with sleep and settling issues every year."*

### **Quote attributable to Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn**

*"A child's first 1,000 days of life are critical – and this centre will offer the specialist early intervention and prevention programs families need, close to home to give their child the best start in life."*

### **Quote attributable to the Member for Mill Park Lily D'Ambrosio**

*"We know that sleep and settling can be some of the biggest challenges for new parents and caregivers to face – so we're bringing more specialised support to mums, dads and caregivers in the City of Whittlesea and surrounding communities."*

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