

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Health Infrastructure

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FIRST LOOK AT GEELONG'S NEW EARLY PARENTING CENTRE

The Allan Labor Government is ensuring new parents across Geelong and the Surf Coast will soon get the specialised support they need, closer to home – with a new Early Parenting Centre nearing completion.

Located at Barwon Health's McKellar Centre in North Geelong, construction on the multi-million-dollar centre will wrap up next month – making it the fourth of 12 new and additional facilities once doors open.

Designed to feel like a home away from home, the centre will support families with children up to four years of age, giving them expert advice and care when they need it most – including 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 those who use a Victorian Early Parenting Centre 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 in North Geelong will feature 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, allowing families to bring multiple children or accommodate an older sibling, grandparent, or other carer during their stay.

It also features a purpose-built centre also includes kitchen and dining areas, playrooms and outdoor play areas.

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

Once completed, this total investment will provide support to more than 5,000 extra families each year, meaning that more families with babies and young children can get the early parenting support they need closer to home.

Building on this work, this year's budget also delivered funding to increase the time newborns spend with maternal and child health nurses to 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 exciting times for any parent – but we know it can also be a stressful and difficult time and this new centre will support hundreds of families in the Geelong region every year."

Quote attributable to Member for Lara Ella George

"The Geelong Early Parenting Centre will be a great addition to the health services in the region, providing local families with more support during the early stages parenthood."

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Quote attributable to Member for Geelong Chris Couzens

“We are establishing Early Parenting Centres because we know becoming a parent can be difficult – this new centre will ensure Geelong parents have access to world class facilities and support they deserve.”

Quote attributable to Member for Bellarine Alison Marchant

“It is amazing seeing the progress being made on this new centre which will provide parenting support to hundreds of families across Geelong and the Bellarine very soon.”