

Media Release

The Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Minister for Children
Minister for Disability



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FIRST LOOK AT BALLARAT'S NEW EARLY PARENTING CENTRE

New parents across the Ballarat region will soon have access to the specialised support they need closer to home, with the Allan Labor Government's new Early Parenting Centre nearing completion.

Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn toured the new multi-million-dollar facility before doors open at the end of May, making it the fifth of 12 new and additional locations across Victoria.

Designed to feel like a home away from home, the Ballarat facility will feature 10 home stay family units and four day-stay places, providing both short-term and longer programs to improve the health, wellbeing and developmental outcomes of children up to four years of age.

The home stay 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 centre also includes kitchen and dining areas, playrooms and outdoor play areas.

The new centre will provide expert advice to parents experiencing challenges with sleep and settling, feeding, as well as 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 – sadly, this can often lead to post-natal depression, isolation and stress for parents and affect a child's behavioural, mental and physical development.

The 12 Early Parenting Centres are part of the Labor Government's \$148 million investment to expand Victoria's early parenting service network – while an \$18.9 million in the *Victorian Budget 2023/24* will deliver the 2022 election commitment to build a new centre in Northcote and an Aboriginal-led centre in Frankston.

Once complete, they will provide support to more than 5,000 additional Victorian families each year.

Building on this work, the *Victorian Budget 2023/24* also delivered funding to increase the time newborns spend with maternal and child health nurses, and funding to support new dads' groups across the state.

Quote attributable to Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn

"Being a new parent is one of the most incredible, yet challenging experiences, especially in the early days – this new centre will help hundreds of locals families across Ballarat with the support they need, close to home."

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Infrastructure Mary-Anne Thomas

"This is another exciting milestone as we work to deliver our promise of 12 new and upgraded Early Parenting Centres as part of our \$148 million investment across Victoria."

Quote attributable to Member for Ripon Martha Haylett

"This new early parenting centre will make the world of difference for local families, who can now get the support they deserve with their little one closer to home."

Media contact: Isobel Loschiavo 0431 963 479 | isobel.loschiavo@minstaff.vic.gov.au

Quote attributable to Member for Wendouree Juliana Addison

"We know the challenges that come with being a parent and for hundreds of new mums and dads across Ballarat, this centre will mean getting the support they need close to home and close to their support network."

Quote attributable to Member for Eureka Michaela Settle

"For local parents, having somewhere that is like a home away from home will make a big difference for their health and wellbeing when some extra help with sleep and settling or feeding might be needed."