

## MOONEE PONDS

# Relief group under threat

Linh Ly

## SERVICE THAT HELPS AT-RISK MUMS CALLS FOR STATE SUPPORT

AN ORGANISATION that has helped vulnerable and disadvantaged mothers in Moonee Valley for almost 46 years may be forced out if it cannot secure state funding.

Caroline Chisholm Society chief executive Helen Cooney said the organisation was desperate to build an integrated hub on land it bought in Essendon before its Moonee Ponds lease runs out in 12 months.

The society applied for

money from the State Government last year but was told it couldn't be approved in the lead-up to an election.

"We have brought to the project \$1 million worth of land and our community in Moonee Valley has raised more than \$300,000, but we need the \$950,000 for it to go ahead," Ms Cooney said.

Among the features of the proposed two-storey building is a reception area,

consultation rooms, volunteer and fundraising space, meeting rooms, group space, accessible toilets and a kitchenette.

The plan includes hosting other services such as playgroups, psychologists, counsellors and other emergency relief.

"If we were located in only Shepparton and Caroline Springs (their other branches), people would not be

able to get to us easily for emergency relief," Ms Cooney said.

The organisation, which cares for women during and after pregnancy, helps up to 2000 clients a year who face issues such as family violence, homelessness and mental health problems.

"People have literally come to us for formula or a bassinet as soon as they leave hospital because they

don't have anything else," Ms Cooney said.

Essendon state Labor MP Danny Pearson said he acknowledged the importance of keeping the society local, but funding decisions would be made as part of the State Budget process.

Ms Cooney said plans for the centre had been approved and construction could begin within three months of a funding

guarantee, but any delays put the project in jeopardy.

Moonee Valley Mayor Narelle Sharpe said the council, which has provided grants and donations to the organisation, would send a letter of support for the application to the State Government.

"While some parts of the municipality are quite affluent, there are many people in the community who need a lot of help, particularly younger mothers," Cr Sharpe said.

## MOONEE VALLEY FESTIVAL



Charlotte, 3, Jeyda, 4, Zoe, 3, Kayla, 2, and Desteny, 4, boogie with the Bananas in Pyjamas at Moonee Valley Festival. Pictures by JOSIE HAYDEN

## EAST WEST LINK

## Link legal challenge set to start

MOONEE Valley Council case's against the East West Link will be before the Supreme Court on Friday.

The council launched the case against former state Planning Minister Matthew Guy and abolished infrastructure body Linking Melbourne Authority in November, a potentially \$200,000 challenge against the state's design changes.

Moonee Valley Mayor Narelle Sharpe said despite the Labor State Government winding up the project, the council was yet to receive firm confirmation it was definitely not going ahead.

"We won't prejudice the position of our ratepayers by abandoning our legal action before all issues relating to the project are finalised," she said.

Premier Daniel Andrews said they would not build the project, and could not have made their position any clearer on the issue.

By January 22, the council had spent about \$75,000 on legal costs, but did not respond to questions on how much had been spent as of last week.



Young Australian Broadway Chorus.

## Families roll up for festival fun

QUEENS Park came to life on Sunday as thousands of community members braved the humidity for the Moonee Valley Festival.

The 38th annual event drew crowds of all ages to Moonee Ponds for stage shows, food and drink, rides, workshops and more.

The Bananas in Pyjamas were a big hit for the little ones when they took to the stage for two performances at the Rendina Real Estate Kids Kingdom.

Meanwhile, performers such as the Young Australian Broadway Chorus (pictured left), graced one of

four stages for live music, dancing, taekwondo, callisthenics and circus art.

The addition of a cider bar and giant rubber duck were deemed a huge success at the event and Moonee Valley Council will consider welcoming them back next year.

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