

ESSENDON

Family support hub building work to get underway

THE first shovel will soon strike dirt to begin construction of Caroline Chisholm Society's family support hub.

Society chief executive Helen Cooney (pictured) said a building permit was received on November 27



and works were expected to begin in Essendon within the month.

"We're very excited that building is going to start and we're looking forward to our longevity in

Moonee Valley," Ms Cooney said.

The organisation ran a long campaign to fundraise to build its new headquarters after it outgrew its current Moonee Ponds site.

The project was realised after the State Government

granted \$950,000 to the organisation.

Ms Cooney said they hoped to move into the new site late next year, but complications could exist if its current lease, which runs out in February, cannot be extended.

"We're unsure about our tenure in Shuter St and we're hoping that we could stay there a bit longer," she said.

"There is a risk that our lease will not be continued and therefore we'll have significant issues for that, (but)

we're not sure what's going to happen for our temporary site until the new building opens."

The society is collecting donations of newborn gifts to give to babies.

Visit 12 Shuter St, Moonee Ponds, to donate.

MOONEE PONDS

'Like winning Tattslotto'

COMMUNITY HOUSING RELIEF

Linh Ly

MORE than 60 residents who are elderly, have a disability or are on low incomes now call Essendon home thanks to a community housing project.

The Wominjeka Apartments, at 1064 Mt Alexander Rd, were built to provide affordable housing to those on state transfer waiting lists and low incomes.

Anne Bonanno, who cares for 70-year-old Graeme Billingham, is among those to gain tenancy, having spent three years waiting to transfer from their Moonee Ponds bedsit.

"We were promised a bigger unit in six months, but three years later we were still there," Ms Bonanno said.

"I had to sleep on the fold-out couch - no wonder I've got a sore back."

Ms Bonanno said the new apartment was like "winning Tattslotto".

"I never thought we'd live in a location like this. This place is beautiful and the tram is right across the road, which is great for going to the Royal Melbourne for medical appointments."

Not-for-profit organisation

Port Phillip Housing Association funded and developed the apartments and partnered with Wintringham Housing to select local tenants from the public housing waiting list.

Association chairman Frank O'Connor said the project allowed it to add social housing stock without costing the government money.

"It's a great way to solve that horrendous problem that is a growing public housing waiting list," Mr O'Connor said.

"One of the things we focus on is housing local people.

"People have a connection to the area because they've grown up there. It's important to maintain that sense of community."

The five-level building includes 60 units, two of which are purpose-built for people in wheelchairs and the rest are able to be modified for disability requirements if needed.

More than half the new tenants rely on government pensions or benefits, while the rest are on low incomes.

The rent for community housing is 30 per cent of the tenants' incomes, under government legislation.



A community housing development has given carer Anne Bonanno a new lease on life.

Picture: KYLIE ELSE

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