

# Early Years – Family Support Community Infrastructure Priorities

## ***Fact Sheet: Whittlesea Township Early Years’ Redevelopment***

### **Our Municipality**

The City of Whittlesea is located 20km north of Melbourne. It is a large municipality covering an area of 490 square km of both urban and rural land and has a current population of over 134,000. The City includes the suburbs of Bundoora, Donnybrook, Doreen, Eden Park, Epping, Humevale, Kinglake West, Lalor, Mernda, Mill Park, South Morang, Thomastown and Whittlesea. The City of Whittlesea is a designated growth area and is experiencing a sustained period of rapid urban growth, particularly on the urban fringe. Since 2001 around 20,000 people have moved in to the municipality, over 8,500 dwellings have been built, and an additional 2000 building approvals have been issued. This growth is predicted to remain strong for the next 25 years or more with a projected increase in our population to 240,000 by 2031.

The municipality faces the distinctive challenges of balancing the dynamics of urban areas, rural areas, rapid growth, social disadvantage and high demand for services. The City has one of the most culturally diverse populations, with over 48% of residents coming from non-English speaking backgrounds. Whittlesea has also the fourth highest population of Indigenous people in metropolitan Melbourne. The City of Whittlesea is characterised by pockets of high socio-economic disadvantage, ranking the sixth most disadvantaged on the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage and the fourth most disadvantaged on the Index of Education and Occupation.

To accommodate this growth, diversity and high service demand, the City requires practical responses that balance community development, economic growth and environmental wellbeing.

Insufficient resources, because of inappropriate funding formulae, have failed to keep up with population growth resulting in a backlog of community infrastructure renewal and creation within both established and emerging communities.

Increased State and Federal Government investment in social infrastructure is essential to achieve a basic level of service provision.

### **The Need**

The Whittlesea Township is under-served in relation to occasional care, playgroup venues, and specialist services. Research and community consultation have highlighted the need in the Whittlesea Township for a multi-function early years centre that can host a range of early years services. Parents who do not have access to child care are unable to be supported by the Neighbourhood House program in the Township. Currently, because of lack of space for the program, there is no capacity for occasional care.

### **Proposal**

The redevelopment of the Community Activity Centre in Laurel Street, Whittlesea into an integrated early years facility to incorporate maternal and child health, neighbourhood house activities, meeting space and an early years multi-purpose room, which can accommodate occasional care and playgroups.

### **Cost**

Funding of \$2.8M is being sought towards the total cost of the project.

## State Government Policy Alignment

### ***Growing Victoria Together***

The health of Victorians will improve. The well being of young children will improve.

### ***A Fairer Victoria: Strategy 1: Giving Children the Best start in life***

#### ***Joining the Dots Recommendation 30***

“That the Victorian Government provide further capital funding and other incentives for the co-location and integration of services for young children and families, building on the existing Children’s Centres program”.

### ***A Fairer Victoria: Strong People, Strong Communities Getting the Best Start – Early years support for children and families most at risk***

‘Intensive early years support for children and families most at risk can make a profound difference. A child’s cognitive development and emotional resilience provides a foundation for many of the health-related behaviours they take into adulthood.’

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## ***Fact Sheet: Redgum Community Activity Centre: Early Years Demonstration Project / Neighbourhood House***

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### **The Need**

The Redgum Community Activity Centre (CAC) will be the major community facility to service the western portion of the growth area (west of Plenty Road) of South Morang. South Morang is the most developed of the three growth areas within the City of Whittlesea, being approximately halfway through its growth period. The total population of South Morang is now 12,300 (2006 Census) and is expected to grow to 22,000 at full development in the year 2021. This site has been identified as the first suitable opportunity that will be available to implement the concept of co-location of early years services on school sites.

### **Proposal**

The South Morang Local Structure Plan 1995, identified the need for this CAC to service the needs of the South Morang Growth Area. Funding constraints have delayed the development of this site, causing critical levels of unmet demand for kindergarten, meeting room and hall space within the community.

The Redgum CAC includes the following components: dual Maternal & Child Health, dual kindergarten, meeting rooms, agency space, hall and neighbourhood house activities.

This facility is planned to provide services both at a neighbourhood and a regional level. Demand will come from Mernda/Doreen and the Whittlesea Township as needs derived from their growth and development outstrip local community infrastructure service provision, until services there are further developed.

Strategic planning undertaken to date has allocated a co-located site for both the CAC and the State Government Primary School. This presents the opportunity for the location of early years services (both MCH and Kindergarten) on the school site whilst also allowing built form integration, service integration and a self-sustaining governance structure to allow the key community partnerships to deliver services successfully.

### **Demonstration Opportunity**

Any community activity centre provides a critical hub for residents. However this community activity centre facility presents the opportunity for a demonstration project to embed the State Government's policy direction to have Kindergartens located on school sites, allowing for truly integrated service provision. It would also allow the development of a community hub founded and supported in a sustainable governance model for the precinct as a whole.

### **Cost**

The Redgum Community Activity Centre is expected to cost in the vicinity of \$6M. Development contributions will be a land contribution only, and will not cover the cost of construction. Alternative funding sources and models will be pursued actively, to assist in the delivery of this project.

Funding for a project worker to facilitate and formalise the partnerships within a governance model and embed service integration within a sustainable framework will also be critical for project success. This would be a three year project costing \$90,000 per annum.

Design for this facility will begin in 2008-09 with construction in 2009-10.

### **State Government Policy Alignment**

#### ***A Fairer Victoria:***

#### ***Strategy 12: Building Stronger Communities***

#### ***Action 12.2: Modernise Neighbourhood Houses***

"Neighbourhood Houses.....play a significant role in linking communities, offering a place for people to come together and contribute to building stronger communities."

#### ***Action 12.8 Support new community projects***

"Continue to provide support for community projects through the Community Support Fund...by upgrading community infrastructure , developing skills and leadership abilities, encouraging greater community participation and promoting the optimal use of community resources and facilities."

#### ***A Fairer Victoria:***

#### ***New Initiatives for Metropolitan Melbourne***

"Fund up to four new Neighbourhood Houses and redevelop Neighbourhood House facilities in disadvantaged areas".

#### ***A Fairer Victoria: Strong People, Strong Communities***

#### ***Getting the Best Start – Early years support for children and families most at risk***

'Quality maternal and child health programs provide a boost to long-term health and development prospects of children. Quality kindergarten programs have been shown to improve the long-term probability of attaining a quality education and making a successful transition to employment. Together, they can reduce exposure to high risk behaviours in adolescence and contribute significantly to achieving long-term gains in health, wellbeing, education and income into adulthood.'

'We will continue to refurbish and rebuild early childhood services in priority areas, co-locating where possible with schools.'

#### ***Integrating Education and Community Facilities for Lifelong Learning***

'Beyond places for learning, schools are important social hubs for children and families to connect. We will continue to support new partnerships that bridge schools to the wider community, developing facilities for increased use by all the community.' (p.16)

# Early Years – Family Support Community Infrastructure Priorities

## **Fact Sheet: Epping North Community Activity Centre (Lyndarum)**

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### **The Need**

Lyndarum Community Activity Centre (CAC) will be the second of the seven multipurpose community activity centres that are planned for the 50,000 residents in the Epping North growth area. The Lyndarum CAC will be strategically located in a main street based neighbourhood centre and co-located with a funded primary school.

### **Proposal**

Community Activity Centres such as that proposed for Lyndarum, will typically comprise around 1200m<sup>2</sup> of floor space including a dual preschool, maternal & child health centre, a range of flexible community meeting rooms, consulting and agency space, and a hall providing an important community hub for residents. There are also opportunities to link with the local primary school to be located across the road and scheduled to open in 2009.

### **Cost**

The Lyndarum Community Activity Centre is expected to cost in the vicinity of \$3.8M (of which, around \$1.4M will be available from development contributions over a 10-12 year timeframe).

Design for this facility will begin in 2008-09 and construction will take place over both the 2009-10 and the 2010-11 financial years.

## State Government Policy Alignment

***A Fairer Victoria:  
Strategy 12: Building stronger communities  
Action 12.8 Support new community projects***

“Continue to provide support for community projects through the Community Support Fund.... by upgrading community infrastructure , developing skills and leadership abilities, encouraging greater community participation and promoting the optimal use of community resources and facilities”.

***Joining the Dots  
Recommendation 30***

“That the Victorian Government provide further capital funding and other incentives for the co-location and integration of services for young children and families, building on the existing Children’s Centres program”.

***A Fairer Victoria – The Continuing Commitment:***

‘....Providing targeted support to the highest risk areas with significant effort and resources directed towards addressing place-based disadvantage. These efforts will continue and extend work with new and emerging communities to plan and build support to prevent community disadvantage before it takes hold.’

## Federal Government Policy Alignment

***An Australian Social Inclusion Agenda, Gillard & Wong, Election 2007***

‘To be socially included, all Australians must be given the opportunity to .....connect with others in life through family, friends, work, personal interests and local community.’

# Early Years – Family Support Community Infrastructure Priorities

## **Fact Sheet: Expansion Of The Mill Park Heights Child Care Centre**

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### **The Need**

The existing community managed child care centre, the Mill Park Heights Child Care Centre, currently provides 66 places of affordable child care in a precinct where a range of services is provided for children and families including an adjoining community kindergarten; and a community managed recreation / leisure centre with occasional care, vacation care and learn to swim activities. This centre is owned by the Whittlesea City Council, and managed by the Whittlesea YMCA, a community based, not for profit organisation.

The Mill Park Heights Child Care Centre currently has a waiting list of more than 50 families and the community kindergarten next door has a waiting list for 4 year old kindergarten. Highest demand for child care is for children aged birth to 2 years. Children aged 0-8 years of age comprise approximately 9% of the population with a consistent rate of growth in the number of young children and families requiring early years services and child care over the next 25 years.

According to 2006 Commonwealth data there is a lack of timely accessible registered child care services for children and families in the municipality of Whittlesea compared to other Interface municipalities. The lack of registered child care is of primary concern for local parents wanting/needing to participate in the workforce. There is also the trend of a mono-service type of child care in the municipality with a significant lack of affordable, community based, not for profit choice for families seeking registered child care.

As at July 2008, more than 80% of child care places are provided by private operators in the City of Whittlesea. Local analysis of child care waiting lists also indicates relatively low waiting lists in privately managed child care services compared to high unmet demand in community managed child care services.

### **The Proposal**

To access the Federal Government's funding for Early Learning and Care Centres for the purposes of expanding an existing community managed child care centre, the Mill Park Heights Child Care Centre. The expanded centre will provide an additional 50 child care places and to create an integrated hub of expanded early years services. By increasing the number of child care places at the Mill Park Heights Child Care Centre, Whittlesea Council in partnership with the Australian Government and the community based child care provider (Whittlesea YMCA Inc), can provide a greater choice for local families seeking affordable, community managed, not for profit child care for their young children in this growth corridor of Melbourne.

This expanded child care service also proposes to include a consulting room where outreach maternal and child health services and other specialist support services such as family support counselling services will be offered to create a child and family hub model of integrated early years service provision.

This redeveloped child care facility will provide additional places of child care for local children and families within a precinct of community based services including kindergarten, occasional care, vacation care and recreation/leisure services. The expanded service will offer more affordable community based child care choice for families in the local area where more than 80% of child care services are managed by private and corporate providers. This project is strongly supported by the Whittlesea YMCA with opportunities for co-investment between the Australian Government and Council.

**If successful, planning for this expansion project would commence in 2009.**

### **Federal Government Policy Alignment**

#### **Early Learning and Care Centres**

"The Australian Government's agenda for early childhood education and child care focuses on providing Australian families with high-quality, accessible and affordable integrated early childhood education and child care. The agenda has a strong emphasis on connecting with schools to ensure all Australian children are fully prepared for learning and life. Investing in the health, education, development and care of our children benefits children and their families, our communities and the economy, and is critical to lifting workforce participation and delivering the Government's productivity agenda."

"Establishing up to 260 additional Early Learning and Care Centres across Australia. Where possible, the additional centres will be located on school, TAFE, university or other community land."

"The 2008-09 Budget invests \$114.5 million over four years to build the first 38 additional Early Learning and Care Centres, which will include six autism-specific centres."

[http://www.oceccc.gov.au/new\\_agenda.htm](http://www.oceccc.gov.au/new_agenda.htm)

#### **An Australian Social Inclusion Agenda, Gillard & Wong, Election 2007**

Many who are not in the workforce face multiple barriers to participation, including .....lack of access to childcare.

Access to childcare and other support for those with caring responsibilities is a significant barrier to participation, with about 10,000 unemployed citing this as the main reason for their difficulty in finding work. This also acts as a barrier to accessing more hours for those who are underemployed.

Workforce participation is a foundation of social inclusion: it creates opportunities for financial independence and personal fulfilment. Labor believes that as well as being good for individuals, increasing workforce participation benefits local communities, regions and the broader economy.

# Early Years – Family Support Community Infrastructure Priorities

## **Fact Sheet: "Redgum" Community Activity Centre site - Child Care Centre**

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### **The Need**

Demand for child care centres in this locality is high. Children aged 0-8 years of age comprise approximately 9% of the population with a consistent rate of growth in the number of young children and families requiring early years services and child care over the next 25 years.

According to 2006 Commonwealth data there is a lack of timely accessible registered child care services for children and families in the municipality of Whittlesea compared to other Interface municipalities. The lack of registered child care is of primary concern for local parents wanting/needing to participate in the workforce. There is also the trend of a mono-service type of child care in the municipality with a significant lack of affordable, community based, not for profit choice for families seeking registered child care. As at July 2008, more than 80% of child care places are provided by private operators in the City of Whittlesea. Local analysis of child care waiting lists also indicates relatively low waiting lists in privately managed child care services compared to high unmet demand in community managed child care services, where waiting lists are high.

Evidence of demand for this service at this locality is also highlighted in Council's Municipal Early Years Plan 2006-2008 which indicates that planning for an integrated early years Community Activity Centre will commence in 2009 to ensure the timely provision of quality early years services for this growth area.

### **The Proposal**

To access the Federal Governments Early Learning and Care Centre funding to build an integrated Early Learning and Care Centre of approximately 100 child

care places embedded on a future primary school site in the growth suburb of South Morang. The population projections indicate more than 22,000 people will reside in this area by around 2016. Between 2008-2013, the projected population of children aged 0-8 years is expected to grow to more than 5000, with a high demand for early education and care services.

This Early Learning and Care Centre will be located on a "greenfields site", the location of a future State Government primary school site, which adjoins the existing Mary Meade Catholic P-12 school. This facility will form part of a precinct of services for young children and their families in a "Child and Family Hub" model of early intervention, care and education services. Early Learning and Care services and programs to be provided in this facility include integrated child care and kindergarten education (including three and four year old kindergarten programs), occasional child care, Council's Maternal and Child Health services and playgroups.

This Centre also proposes to include consulting rooms for community based organisations such as Centacare Family Services, to deliver centre based or community outreach services such as family support, financial counselling and parenting support services; services in great demand and currently not provided in this area. Key stakeholders including local residents and primary school staff will be involved in the planning and ongoing management of the Child and Family Hub.

This proposal is in partnership with Whittlesea City Council and Centacare Family Services, a community based not for profit organisation that proposes to provide co-investment in the development and ongoing management of the integrated Early Learning and Care Centre.

This site presents an exceptional opportunity for the Commonwealth Government to partner with Local Government and a not for profit, community service agency, to deliver affordable, high quality, integrated childcare, education, health and family support services for young children and their families on a co-located State Government Primary school site.

## **Planning for an integrated early years Community Activity Centre will commence in 2009.**

### **Federal Government Policy Alignment**

#### **Early Learning and Care Centres**

"The Australian Government's agenda for early childhood education and child care focuses on providing Australian families with high-quality, accessible and affordable integrated early childhood education and child care. The agenda has a strong emphasis on connecting with schools to ensure all Australian children are fully prepared for learning and life. Investing in the health, education, development and care of our children benefits children and their families, our communities and the economy, and is critical to lifting workforce participation and delivering the Government's productivity agenda."

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#### **An Australian Social Inclusion Agenda, Gillard & Wong, Election 2007**

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Access to childcare and other support for those with caring responsibilities is a significant barrier to participation, with about 10,000 unemployed citing this as the main reason for their difficulty in finding work. This also acts as a barrier to accessing more hours for those who are underemployed.

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# Early Years – Family Support Community Infrastructure Priorities

## **Fact Sheet: Main Street Thomastown Schools Redevelopment site- Child Care Centre**

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### **The Need**

Demand for community managed child care centres in this locality is high. Children aged 0-8 years of age comprise approximately 9% of the population with a consistent rate of growth in the number of young children and families requiring early years services and child care over the next 25 years.

According to 2006 Commonwealth data there is a lack of timely accessible registered child care services for children and families in the municipality of Whittlesea compared to other Interface municipalities. The lack of registered child care is of primary concern for local parents wanting/needing to participate in the workforce. There is also the trend of a mono-service type of child care in the municipality with a significant lack of community based, not for profit choice for families seeking registered child care. As at July 2008, more than 80% of child care places are provided by private operators in the City of Whittlesea. Local analysis of child care waiting lists also indicates relatively low waiting lists in privately managed child care services in Thomastown compared to high unmet demand in community managed child care services, where waiting lists are high. The only local community managed child care service has a waiting list of 40 children waiting for child care in the immediate local area.

### **The Proposal**

This proposal to develop a new Early Learning and Care Centre in Main Street Thomastown is based on the following priority areas of need and demand:

1. Building on the Victorian State Government Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) Northern Region "South

Whittlesea Education Regeneration Project" proposal, to create a new educational complex on the existing Thomastown West Primary School and Thomastown Secondary School sites.

This schools regeneration proposal creates a platform for a future continuum of educational facilities and community services within the Main Street education precinct into an early years - primary - secondary school - tertiary education continuum.

2. This funding will be used to build an integrated Early Learning and Care Centre of approximately 75 child care places embedded in the redeveloped schools site. This project will also explore the integration of one of Council's nearby "stand alone" community based kindergartens which currently delivers 3 and 4 year old kindergarten programs to create an integrated child care and kindergarten education early years model; and the relocation of Council's Maternal and Child Health services to also be delivered from this integrated Early Learning and Care Centre on the redeveloped school site. This centre also proposes to include consulting rooms for community based organisations to deliver outreach services such as early intervention services, family support, financial counselling and parenting support services to local children and families in this disadvantaged community.

3. This proposed integrated Early Learning and Care Centre is also ideally located to provide a range of inclusive population-specific early years and children's services to the growing community of Indigenous children and families who either live within, or near to, this Thomastown locality.

The Indigenous population in the City of Whittlesea is growing, with a 24% increase in population between 2001-2006 to now make up 0.7% of the local population (ABS 2006). Local evidence suggest that Indigenous children are under-represented in universal children's services, with low participation rates in child care, kindergarten and maternal and child health services.

The State Government Secretary of the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) has identified the municipality of Whittlesea for the

location of a Whittlesea Local Indigenous Community Partnership Project.

The consultation process has engaged local Indigenous community members who have identified the need for a range of early years services in the Thomastown area as a priority aspect of this project. Indigenous community members have to travel long distances to access culturally appropriate and affordable services for their young children and families, including maternal and child health, child care, family support programs and health services. This Early Learning and Care centre will provide culturally appropriate targeted early years programs, parenting and family support services to local indigenous families, with a service model to be developed in partnership with local indigenous community members, DPCD, Aboriginal community sector agencies and a wide range of other community sector organisations such as Family Support agencies.

The culturally relevant early learning and care services provided at this future centre will aim to improve access and participation of Indigenous children and their families in the range of preventative and early intervention services that can improve outcomes. The management of this Early Learning and Care Centre will also focus on the importance of local indigenous community participation and ownership by establishing a partnership group involving policy makers, service providers and local community members. It is intended that this community reference group will have responsibility for setting program activities and would be regularly engaged in culturally appropriate service planning and development. Both the Victorian Secretary of the Department of Planning and Community Development and the Victorian Indigenous Taskforce endorse this proposal for an Early Learning and Care Centre to be embedded in this school site as a continuum of improved services for our local indigenous children and families.

4. This location will also support non-Indigenous vulnerable and disadvantaged local families by providing affordable community managed children's services.

5. According to the 2006 Socio-Economic Index of Areas (SEIFA) Index of Relative Disadvantage, the municipality of Whittlesea ranks as the 6th most disadvantaged in the State of Victoria.

Thomastown West, the locality of this proposed Early Learning and Care site, ranks second highest in the municipality with attributes associated with disadvantage such as low income, low educational attainment and high unemployment. In addition to providing highly demanded child care, this Early Learning and Care centre would act as a child and family hub of targeted services for vulnerable families, ideally located within a continuum of education services.

5. The local evidence for the demand for additional child care places at this locality has also been documented since 2004, when the 'Strategic Plan for Human Service Delivery in the City of Whittlesea' identified significant gaps in human services provision such as child care services, exacerbated by the rapid rate of population growth. The Strategy specifically identifies that a minimum of 40 additional community managed child care places are required in the Thomastown area.

6. Demand for this proposed community based Early Learning and Care service in this locality is further evidenced by a lack of private or corporate market interest in developing large scale child care services in more socio-economically disadvantaged communities. Market forces determine that Thomastown is not a viable locality to develop the large scale private or corporate child care services that are being developed in other growth areas of this municipality.

### **Partnership**

The Whittlesea City Council as part of the Whittlesea Community Futures (WCF) - Thomastown Precinct Alliance – have formally submitted an application for this project. This partnership approach to precinct planning is a strength of this application, where partners including the two schools are already working in collaboration to create a vision for the new schools redevelopment, and to work towards seamless integration of early education and care services for children and families in this locality of significant disadvantage.

The Whittlesea Community Futures (WCF) Project Partnership is broadly based and multi-sectoral and there is wide agreement concerning the lack of human services including Early Learning and Care services and facilities in the municipality. The WCF Project originated from a Victorian Government initiative to support and fund local government and locally based organisations to take a joined-up approach with the community to develop innovative human service delivery models for the City of Whittlesea.

Partners in Whittlesea Community Futures are now working together to develop replicable service system delivery models that are accessible to all service users, offer a broad continuum of services and tailor the services to the needs of the service users. The service delivery goal of Thomastown Precinct Alliance Project is to develop a holistic and responsive service system for children from early years to young adulthood with the aim of addressing and improving the health and well being indicators for children and young people.

WCF Partnership members have expressed keen interest in this project and a working group of representatives from 11 organisations has been formed. Key members of this group are the Principals of Thomastown Secondary College and Thomastown West Primary, the Senior Education Officer for the Northern Region of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and community based agencies such as Melbourne City Mission, Kildonan Family Services and Children's Protection Society. **This project as part of the schools redevelopment has a 3-5 year (2011-2013) timeframe for precinct redevelopment.**

## Federal Government Policy Alignment

### **Early Learning and Care Centres**

“The Australian Government’s agenda for early childhood education and child care focuses on providing Australian families with high-quality, accessible and affordable integrated early childhood education and child care. The agenda has a strong emphasis on connecting with schools to ensure all Australian children are fully prepared for learning and life. Investing in the health, education, development and care of our children benefits children and their families, our communities and the economy, and is critical to lifting workforce participation and delivering the Government’s productivity agenda.”

“Establishing up to 260 additional Early Learning and Care Centres across Australia. Where possible, the additional centres will be located on school, TAFE, university or other community land.”

“The 2008-09 Budget invests \$114.5 million over four years to build the first 38 additional Early Learning and Care Centres, which will include six autism-specific centres.”

[http://www.oceccc.gov.au/new\\_agenda.htm](http://www.oceccc.gov.au/new_agenda.htm)

### **An Australian Social Inclusion Agenda, Gillard & Wong, Election 2007**

Many who are not in the workforce face multiple barriers to participation, including .....lack of access to childcare.

Access to childcare and other support for those with caring responsibilities is a significant barrier to participation, with about 10,000 unemployed citing this as the main reason for their difficulty in finding work. This also acts as a barrier to accessing more hours for those who are underemployed.

Workforce participation is a foundation of social inclusion: it creates opportunities for financial independence and personal fulfilment. Labor believes that as well as being good for individuals, increasing workforce participation benefits local communities, regions and the broader economy.