



TONY PASIN MP
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR BARKER

4 February 2020

MEDIA RELEASE

\$1.5M DROUGHT FUND ENSURES UP TO 165 NEW CHILDCARE PLACES ON OFFER FOR SOUTHERN MALLEE FAMILIES

Up to 165 childcare places will be available in the Southern Mallee district from next week, as two new full-time centres open their doors thanks to a \$1.5 million drought project.

Funded by the Australian Government's Drought Communities Fund Program – approximately \$1m, in partnership with the Southern Mallee District Council contributing approximately \$500,000 - the two purpose-built centres have been established in Pinnaroo and Lamerook and will service dozens of families.

This is a historic moment for the excited local community, with many parents struggling financially from the drought, and up until now, unable to pursue off-farm work opportunities due to the lack of local childcare and out of school hours care services. It's also a major boost for local businesses and industry, as a new workforce will become available to fill the extensive labour vacancies which currently exist across the region.

Prior to the opening of the two centres, Southern Mallee families had access to only 19 local childcare places over two days. The distance to other major centres for care was prohibitive and the limited number of childcare places created a burden on families and extended families.

Southern Mallee Chief Executive Officer Jason Taylor said the opening of the two centres will have positive community outcomes by enhancing family wellbeing, mental health, early years learning, local industry support, community connectedness and economic growth.

"The immediate and long-term outcomes for our community from creating these centres will be immeasurable," Mr Taylor says.

"Part of creating and sustaining communities where families want live and raise their children, is in providing the best possible services, facilities and environment in which they can thrive.

"We already we have strong enrolment numbers at both sites across the whole week, but we expect more to come over the coming months as people start to learn more about what is on offer, and have the confidence to take up local job offers knowing their children will have access to consistent, high-quality care.

Mr Taylor said there were several Pinnaroo and Lamerook businesses currently searching for employees, and now many of these could be filled by local parents who have been unable to work due to childcare constraints.

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Federal Member for Barker Tony Pasin said it was great to see the centres open for the social and economic benefit of the Southern Mallee community.

“These childcare places have been in demand for a long time, and off the back of a severe national drought, farming families across the country are having to look for extra income outside of their farms,” Mr Pasin says.

“We have highly-skilled, qualified and experienced parents living in our communities who now have the opportunity to explore their career options. This will support household incomes, improve mental health and help keep our communities vibrant, great places to live, even in the tough times.

“More than \$300 million has now been committed to local governments nationally under the Federal Government’s Drought Communities Program since 2018-19.”

The two centres, to be known as *Pinnaroo COGS* and *Lameroo COGS*, will complement the excellent schools already operating in these towns (on which they are co-located), and even offer out of school hours care, so current working parents do not have to ‘clock off’ at 3pm.

The Council, alongside Federal Member for Barker Tony Pasin, will formally open the two centres with community celebration events on Saturday, February 8 from 9-10am (Pinnaroo) and 11am-12noon (Lameroo).

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MEDIA EVENT OPPORTUNITIES- SATURDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2020:

Pinnaroo COGS official opening

Date: Saturday, 8 February 2020

Time: 9-10am

Where: Bundey Terrace, Pinnaroo

Details: Ribbon cutting ceremony, tour of facility, some refreshments

Media opps: Photos, interviews with project leaders and local parents

Lameroo COGS official opening

Date: Saturday, 8 February 2020

Time: 11am-12noon

Where: Yappara Road, Lameroo

Details: Ribbon cutting ceremony, tour of facility, some refreshments

Media opps: Photos, interviews with project leaders and local parents

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