

Community Voices Shape Vision for Expanded Early Years Hub in Ouyen

Mallee Track Health and Community Service (MTHCS) has taken an important step toward strengthening early years services in Ouyen, engaging local families in discussions about a proposed upgrade to the Mallee Minors facility that could see the Ouyen Kindergarten co-located on the same site.

At a community engagement meeting held at Mallee Minors last week, parents joined MTHCS representatives to explore the opportunity to apply for a State Government capital grant through the Building Early Education Fund. The proposed project would support the development of an integrated early years hub designed to meet growing demand and deliver enhanced services for local families.

Director of Community Services Lyndal Munro, Early Years Manager Kyra Nathan, and Family Engagement Officer Chloe Hahnel led the discussion, outlining both the vision and the practical benefits of bringing early childhood education and care services together in one location.

The proposal responds directly to increasing community need, with families expressing a desire for more access to childcare, additional days, and improved facilities. With changes on the horizon including expanded funded kindergarten hours of up to 30 hours per week for four year olds by 2031, MTHCS is planning ahead to ensure

the region is well equipped to support young children and working families.

If successful, the upgrade would deliver a modern, purpose built early years precinct, offering expanded capacity, larger and more flexible learning spaces, and improved outdoor environments. Co-locating the Ouyen Kindergarten with Mallee Minors Early Years Centre would also provide significant workforce benefits, supporting staff collaboration, shared resources, and stronger continuity of care for children.

For families, the advantages are clear. A single drop-off point would simplify daily routines, while the potential to expand wrap-around care would better support working parents. The integrated model also opens the door for more holistic, “hub-style” service delivery, with the possibility of incorporating allied health, maternal and child health, and other family supports on site.

A unique feature of the proposed development is its proximity to Pattinson House aged care facility, allowing for the continuation and expansion of intergenerational programs, an initiative already highly valued by both residents and children.



Image L to R: MTHCS Early Years Manager and early years parents gathered for a community engagement session about the possible grant application for EYC facilities expansion at Mallee Minors Ouyen.

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Importantly, the meeting provided an opportunity for families to share their views and help shape the direction of the project. Community support will play a critical role in strengthening MTHCS's grant application, which is due at the end of May.

“This is about planning for the future of our community,” MTHCS Director of Community Services Lyndal Munro shared during the session. “We know demand is growing, and we want to ensure Ouyen families have access to high-quality, connected early years services close to home.”

The proposed development, which could be delivered by 2028 if funding is secured, represents a long-term investment in the health, wellbeing and education of the Mallee Track's youngest residents.

MTHCS will continue to consult with the community as planning progresses, ensuring local voices remain at the heart of this significant initiative.

Karen Wisneske is one of our Mallee Track @ Home Health Care Workers and wanted to share her experiences of connecting with community and the value of the work being done in community.

“Having previously worked in community (home) care with MRCC, this role provided a valuable opportunity to reconnect with grassroots community support.

When I was asked to work on the Mallee Track @ Home program in Underbool, I was more than happy to accept. Having grown up in Underbool, I feel a strong sense of connection to the community and was proud to give back to the people who have been part of my life.

Being involved in community-based work creates opportunities for meaningful experiences and personal growth. Living in Underbool, I have longstanding relationships with many community members. Through the Mallee Track at Home program, even small acts of kindness can make a significant difference in someone's life.

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TRACK



Talk

May 2026

MALLEE TRACK @ home Underbool cont...

Supporting others contributes to building a stronger, more connected, and resilient community.

In my role, I assist clients in maintaining their independence by providing support with daily living activities, such as supervising showering and assisting with dressing, in accordance with their individual care plans. It is essential to support clients rather than take over, ensuring their dignity, independence, and personal choices are respected. Clients have the right to be actively involved in how their care plans are developed and delivered.

It is rewarding to see clients feel comfortable and supported in their own homes, and it is especially meaningful when they request ongoing appointments, reflecting trust and satisfaction with the care provided.”, shared Karen.



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Location:
Ouyen P-12 Doctors Building

Dates: May 13th from 9am - 5pm

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Location:
Ouyen Football & Netball Club

Dates: May 14th from 4pm - 8pm