

**MEDIA RELEASE****DATE:** 23/12/25**TOPIC:** Louise Fitzpatrick retires from Ouyen Kinder after 23 years of service.

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**A fond farewell to a beloved educator, Louise Fitzpatrick retires after 23 years at MTHCS Ouyen Kindergarten**

After 23 years shaping young minds and nurturing generations of children, much-loved Ouyen Kindergarten teacher Louise Fitzpatrick has officially retired, marking the end of an extraordinary chapter in early childhood education in the local community.

Louise's final day was filled with reflection, gratitude and emotion as she farewelled children, families and colleagues who have been part of her journey. While retirement brings excitement for what lies ahead, she admits it also comes with sadness.

"Every year there's that mix of emotions when children move on," Louise said. "But now I'm doing that myself, the last concert, the last excursion, the last paint pot to wash. I want to enjoy it and make sure it's meaningful."

Kyra Nathan, Early Years Manager at Mallee Track Health and Community Service (MTHCS) shared, "Louise has had a profound impact on every child that has come through Ouyen Preschool in her time as a teacher. Her knowledge, dedication, passion and contribution in the Early Years sector cannot be matched. Every child who has attended Ouyen Preschool has been privileged to be guided by Louise and her team in her 23 years as the ECT and Educational Leader. We thank Louise for her amazing career and wish her all the very best for her next adventure in her retirement."

Louise's path into kindergarten teaching was not a straightforward one. Beginning her career as a primary school teacher, she later spent time as a stay-at-home mum on a farm raising her five children. When she returned to work part-time, she was encouraged to apply for a kindergarten teaching position at Ouyen, a decision that would shape the next two decades of her life.

"I fell into it, but I loved it," she said. "As a kindergarten teacher, the world opened up. You realise how much learning happens before children ever step into primary school, the things that others might take for granted."

Throughout her career, Louise was known for her deep respect for children as capable learners and her belief in the importance of family and community. She strongly valued the role parents play in early learning and the powerful impact of everyday interactions such as talking, reading and sharing routines.

"Children are most influenced by their families," she said. "Those simple, ordinary things are incredibly meaningful in deep and fundamental ways."

Louise also championed strong community connections, welcoming playgroups, older residents and visitors into the kindergarten, and ensuring the centre remained an open, visible and valued part of Ouyen.

“It’s not just a ‘feel good’ thing,” she said. “It’s vital for children’s sense of identity, belonging and mattering.”

Over 23 years, Louise taught generations of children including, in some cases, the children of former students. One particularly touching moment came recently when a parent contacted her after rediscovering her now adult daughter’s kindergarten journal from 17 years earlier.

“She wanted to thank me again,” Louise said. “That was incredibly special.”

Louise credits many colleagues and mentors along the way, including long-time assistants, supportive staff, and influential academics who shaped her thinking and reinforced the value of high-quality early childhood education. She also takes great pride in mentoring educators who went on to complete further study and build their own careers in the sector.

“I’m proud that we helped people find their path in early childhood,” she said. “Experienced teachers should pass it on and I’ve really enjoyed doing that.”

As she steps away from the classroom, Louise looks forward to spending time with her grandchildren and embracing life as a “Nana”, while remaining a passionate advocate for children and early learning.

“It’s been a real privilege to work with families and the community,” she said. “I never planned this path, but it’s worked out really well. I feel very lucky.”

Lyndal Munro, Director of Community Services at MTHCS said, “Huge acknowledgement to Louise for her contribution to Early Years in the Mallee, Louise has taught children over the past 23 years the essential skills for their future learning. Your dedication and hard work is to be applauded. Thank you Louise for sharing your passion for early years education with us all.”

Louise Fitzpatrick leaves behind a lasting legacy at Ouyen Kindergarten, one built on care, curiosity, connection and a deep belief that children truly matter.

## **The End**

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Available images:



(Pictured) Louise Fitzpatrick on her last day at MTHCS Ouyen Kindergarten after 23 years of service.