



MEDIA RELEASE

Date: 20th January 2020

Pakenham Library Reaches Out for the Community

Pakenham Library has recently introduced a series of programs and services aimed at strengthening the local community. The multi-pronged approach involves partnering with social agencies to provide support services to those experiencing homelessness, help for jobseekers, legal advice, women's empowerment programs and a regular 'Social Cafe' for those who may be feeling isolated.

The initiative, spearheaded by Pakenham Library Branch Manager, Ms. Bec Mitchem and developed by the staff team, was created to help address a number of challenges identified by staff and regular library users.

"As a trusted community service, staff at the library get to know our visitors and hear their stories over time. Through these regular discussions, we recognised a number of common themes and challenges our members experience and thought we should get our heads together with the experts to work out what we can do to help", said Ms. Mitchem.

One of the challenges identified was that of the growing issue of lack of affordable housing in the region. Partnering with ERMHA (Eastern Region Mental Health Association), Pakenham Library is now host to the "Community Connections Program (CCP)" every Wednesday, offering those experiencing homelessness housing options and support services.

ERMHA Program Manager, Tim Spinks, said, "Through the Cardinia Shire Council hosted Network Meetings, the CCP Program and Pakenham Library staff were able to connect, identify community needs and trends and establish a weekly 'Homeless Outreach Post' at the library. The collaboration and sessions have already achieved positive outcomes by providing individuals linkages and supports into accommodation as well as providing advice and information."

Support services for jobseekers include one-on-one advice, help with resumes, interview tips, upskilling and filling in application forms. This program, offered every Friday morning at the library, is delivered in collaboration with Outlook, AMP and Max Employment.

Free legal advice is also on offer every Friday morning at the library, delivered by Springvale Monash Legal Service.

Another program created by Casey North CISS (Community Information & Support Service) is aimed at helping women to enhance their skills to strengthen themselves and their relationships. Topics such as healthy communication, improved self-esteem, implementing self-care and financial literacy will be covered in the free eight-week program commencing in February.

Sancha Noranho from Casey North CISS said, "The library offers a welcoming space for vulnerable women who attend programs like the 'Keeping It Together' program. Going to new places can be daunting but the library takes some of that anxiety away as they are able to use the space offered to connect with other women like themselves or take a moment for self-care by taking a book home with them. The staff are incredibly welcoming and friendly, and this contributes to making the venue one that women enjoy attending."

Pakenham Library is also offering a "Social Café" every Thursday night to address social isolation and encourage community members to connect with others. For six weeks the library will be hosting movies, music and workshops as an introduction to an ongoing service.

Further information about these Community Programs can be found at: ccl.vic.gov.au or by contacting Pakenham Library directly on 59 406 200.

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Photo opportunity: To arrange a photo opportunity with Branch Manager Bec Mitchem and/or community partners, please contact Erin Commerford.

Casey Cardinia Libraries is a network of public library services throughout Melbourne's south-east metropolitan corridor with branches located at Cranbourne, Doveton, Emerald, Endeavour Hills, Hampton Park, Narre Warren and Pakenham. A weekly Mobile library service also visits sites throughout Cardinia Shire. Library membership is free and open to everyone.

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