

Support for families doing it tough



Chief Minister Jon Stanhope, executive officer of Uniting Care Mary Mertin-Ryan and CEO of the Snow Foundation Georgina Byron at the launch of the Newpin program, aimed at supporting families in West Belconnen.
Picture: Elesa Lee

By Meredith Clisby

A PROGRAM to support disadvantaged families in West Belconnen was officially launched last week.

The New Parent Infant Network (Newpin), which is run by Uniting Care Kippax, is a community based support program that assists families doing it tough.

Supported by the ACT Government and the Snow Foundation, Newpin offers an opportunity for positive change in life and relationships.

It has been run successfully by Uniting Care Burnside in Victoria for the past 12 years and this is the first branch of the program in Canberra.

The executive officer of Uniting Care Kippax, Mary Mertin-Ryan, said the program had already had a positive effect on families in the area.

"It's an intensive program, it's taught to families experiencing significant difficulties and distress," she said.

"They [the parent] come in every

Tuesday and Wednesday and they make a commitment for one to two years - it's a huge, huge commitment.

"It's a fantastic program; it's a life changing program."

Ms Mertin-Ryan said since opening in July last year, Newpin had taken on eight families with a total of 12 children under five years of age. The program can cater for 10 families.

She said families could self refer or be referred by services such as schools or doctors.

Ms Mertin-Ryan said the program had already made a big difference to the families involved.

"It's all for the kids, that's what it's all about - they are making huge progress," she said.

Ms Merin-Ryan said the mothers were all present at the launch but did not want to be part of the spotlight. She said they had made masks representing their aspirations, which were then displayed on a willow tree "to represent the twists and turns of life".



Supporters of Newpin begin their trek from Fyshwick to Moruya.
Picture: Elesa Lee

Long trek to raise funds for Newpin

THE executive officer of Uniting Care Kippax, Mary Mertin-Ryan, said she had been overwhelmed by the support given to the Newpin (New Parent Infant Network) program.

She was stunned recently when she was told a group of people would walk from Canberra to Moruya over the Easter long weekend to raise money for the program - a total of about 160km.

"They came to us, which was just

fantastic," she said. Ms Mertin-Ryan joined other supporters last Thursday to wave goodbye to the team and said a few people would be in Moruya to cheer them into town on Easter Monday.

Nick Kemp, one of the walkers, said there were about 17 people trekking to the coast and four support vehicles would assist them. He said it represented a real challenge.

"There's a bunch of old bodies around, so we thought it would be a

good challenge and a good target to improve our fitness levels," he said.

Mr Kemp said they would walk in 15km stretches to avoid injuries. He said the group had raised more than \$12,000 before they began and hoped to reach about \$15,000.

Fellow walker Claire Butler said she was excited about the challenge.

"We're doing 160km - I thought it would be a real challenge," she said. "I like what Newpin are doing, it's a really good cause."

Hospital's birth centre celebrates a special day

THE Canberra Hospital Birth Centre celebrated a significant milestone on Thursday, turning 18 years old.

The birth centre, which has assisted in delivering more than 5000 babies, provides care for women who require a low intervention, natural approach to pregnancy and birth.

Women who choose to use this model of care are supported by a known midwife who provides midwifery care and education and support to the women from early pregnancy through to labour and birth and into the early postnatal period.

The Canberra Hospital Birth Centre was one of the first in Australia to offer this mode of continuity of one to one midwifery care, which is recognised as the gold standard of midwifery care.

A guest of the celebrations was ACT Minister for Health Katy Gallagher.



Michelle, Ryan, Jayden, Greg and Faith Purvis of Gordon help celebrate the birth centre's milestone.
Picture: Elesa Lee



Alice Cotter with Lucy and Sasha De Gelder at the celebrations at Canberra Hospital.



The 18th baby of the birth centre Liana Ignatius-Holub and her mother Linda Holub of Barton.



Josephine Bresnik, Gabi McLaren, Aurelia and Kaye Solari, Alyssea Kemp and Toni Dobson at the celebrations.



Faye and Regan Lougheed of Amaroo and Ragen and Angus Rosewarne of Murrumbateman.