

\$2m childcare solution

Work starts on new complex to ease town's chronic shortage

CASTERTON
By **SEAN MCCOMISH**

WORK on a \$2 million child and family complex in Casterton began this week with hopes it will ease pressure on parents searching for childcare places.

Launching the first construction works yesterday, member for Lowan Hugh

Delahunty said there was a clear need for more childcare in the area.

A swag of new services will be on offer at the complex once it opens, including long day care, maternal and child health as well as other allied health services.

"Currently there is no long day care provision in this district," Mr Delahunty said.

"However, once completed this project will provide integrative, inclusive and collaborative early childhood services in something of a 'one stop shop' that will meet community needs."

The centre will also provide after-hours school care.

About \$1.1 million has been injected into the project by the state government with the

“We’ve had people leave our community because they could get childcare.”
— **KAREN STEPHENS**

remaining funds coming from the Glenelg Shire and the Casterton Childcare Action

Committee — which raised \$81,000.

Glenelg Shire mayor and Casterton local Karen Stephens said the complex was expected to open in spring.

"We've had people leave our community because they couldn't get childcare," Cr Stephens said.

Limited places locally forced many parents to seek

care in Hamilton and Mount Gambier, where they work.

She also praised the fund-raising work of the Casterton Childcare Action Committee.

"It's a fantastic effort, they've been going for seven years," she said. "It's great for the community, they will now have options."

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Forums to hear of outage impact

WARRNAMBOOL
By **MATT NEAL**

A FEDERAL government inquiry into the south-west's Telstra outage last November will continue with four forums to be held today and tomorrow.

The forums are aimed at allowing businesses and community service providers, including health and emergency services, to tell the inquiry on how the blackout affected them.

Today's sessions will be held at Camperdown's Killara Centre from 11am-1pm and Warrnambool's Lighthouse Theatre from 5pm-7pm.

Tomorrow's sessions will be held at Portland Civic Hall from 10am-noon and Hamilton Performing Arts Centre from 2.30pm-4.30pm.

Great South Coast Group chairman Chris O'Connor said businesses and individuals affected by the Telstra blackout

should attend the forums if they wanted their voices heard.

"We're still measuring the economic and social impacts of the outage on our region and we may not have a complete picture for some time," Cr O'Connor said.

"In the meantime, these forums will provide opportunity for businesses and people to explain how the (Telstra) exchange fire and subsequent loss of communications really affected them."

Public submissions to the inquiry, which the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy is holding, will close on January 25.

Submissions can be made through www.dcbce.gov.au/warrnambool_inquiry and department representatives will be present at the forums to answer questions.

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Field technicians Clint Gardner (left) and Jason Zhang, from Infrastructure Management Group, and their camera-clad road survey vehicle.

130116RG12 Picture: ROB GUNSTONE



Eyes on the road – all 10 of them

WARRNAMBOOL
By **MATTHEW O'TOOLE**

NO, it's not from Google or the latest crime-busting innovation from Victoria Police.

For the last week an all-seeing, high-tech vehicle has been carrying out a survey on the condition of Warrnambool's 330 kilometres of roads.

Under the city's asset management plan, a road audit must be undertaken every three years and for the first time the council has opted for the mobile, high-tech assessment.

The car has 10 cameras mounted on its roof, along with other precise equipment which can measure the extent of pavement failure, rutting and cracks as little as one-millimetre in size while capturing high-definition video and three-dimensional photos.

Drivers Clint Gardner and Jason Zhang were quick to admit their car has confused plenty of people as they do their work.

"We get a lot of looks as we drive by. Everyone seems to think that we're Google maps. We get that about five times a day," Mr Zhang said.

"Plenty of people wave because they think we're filming them," Mr Gardner added.

Council's asset management co-ordinator John Finnerty believes the project will allow the council to develop an accurate road maintenance plan while getting as much value out of the budget as possible.

"We'd really like to try and save spending money by doing preventative works rather than digging up roads later on," Mr Finnerty said.

The project will also allow for extra transparency of council spending

— concerned ratepayers could be shown visual evidence of why certain projects had been funded.

"It's terribly difficult to justify what we do sometimes," he said.

"We come along and do a reveal simply just to keep water out so it doesn't destroy what's underneath it, but to residents there was no visible problem and the council was just spending money," Mr Finnerty said.

"I hope that we will be able to show people why we did that and show them what the area looked like last year."

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COURT PENALTIES

PENALTIES imposed by magistrate Jonathan Klestadt in Warrnambool Magistrates Court this week included:

- Jason Dwyer, 26, Kerr Street, Mortlake: state false name and address, fail to wear a seatbelt — convicted and fined \$250.
- Kristine Wilson, 41, St James Crescent, Warrnambool: drive an unregistered motor vehicle — without conviction, placed on a six-month good behaviour bond and ordered to pay \$250 to the court fund.
- Mark Peters, 35, Wooles Avenue, Warrnambool: drunk in a public place — convicted and fined \$250.
- Michelle Kavanagh, 38, of Rogers Avenue, Warrnambool: careless driving — convicted and fined \$251.
- Tyler Speak, 20, Philmore Road, Bushfield: careless driving — convicted and fined \$350.
- Denise Ellis, 44, Hopetoun Road, Warrnambool: theft — convicted and fined \$150.
- Scott Grose, 36, McGregors Road, Warrnambool: recklessly causing injury — convicted and fined \$500.
- Michael Mitchell, 23, McAlpine Court, Camperdown: use and possess cannabis — without conviction, placed on a 12-month community corrections order to do 75 hours of unpaid community work.