

NEWS

Thread Together launches

BY ROCHELLE KIRKHAM

A NEW Ballarat retail store is offering a boutique shopping experience for people experiencing hardship to access new, high quality clothing.

Cafs celebrated the official launch of its Thread Together store on Thursday morning, located at the site of its previous Wozzles op shop on Grenville Street.

People experiencing poverty, homelessness, mental illness, people with a disability, refugees, people escaping family violence or relying on social security payments can be referred to Cafs to access the service.

Cafs Thread Together program and volunteer lead Nicole Roberts said the first visitor to the Ballarat Thread Together store was a single mother of four children referred from a homelessness service.

"She said she didn't know when she bought her last pair of underwear and socks and she didn't have any socks. She said this is all of my Christmas' and birthdays coming at once," Ms Roberts said.

"When people walk around the store they say they can't remember the last time they had brand new clothing, how every spare cent they have goes on their children and they can't believe they are shopping for themselves.

"Another lady cried while she was here and said she couldn't believe she was lucky enough to have this."

Referrals can be made by anyone in the community, including school staff, and people in need do not have to be connected to an organisation to access the service.

"If there is a public school who knows of a student who won't go to the end of year formal because they have got nothing to wear, that is all we need," Ms Roberts said.

Customers can make an appointment to browse through the stock of new clothing from highly desired brands at no cost, with the help of friendly volunteers.

Thread Together partner brands including RM Williams, P.E Nation, Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren and The Iconic donate end-of-season clothing, shoes and acces-



DIGNITY: Nicole Roberts and Mary Brierley celebrated the official launch of Cafs' Thread Together store on Thursday. **Picture:** Lachlan Bence

sories instead of sending it to landfill.

Cafs chief executive Wendy Sturgess said the service helped give families dignity, hope and confidence.

"There is a beautiful alignment with sustainability and with restoring hope and dignity to people through having brand new set of clothing and being treated like anybody else," she said.

"People might choose to go and buy things from an op shop, but that is a very different thing to never having had a new set of clothing and new set of shoes in your life, ever.

"We as a society need to remind ourselves how important that is. When you choose to do something versus when you have no choice and all you ever see yourself is as second hand."

Fifty five people have been through the Ballarat store so far, taking home more than 500 items. Children in foster and residential care have been some of the first to use the service. Thread Together chief executive Anthony Chesler said clothing influenced how others saw us and our sense of self.

"Have you ever wondered

what it would be like to wear somewhere else's clothes, underwear or even a bra that doesn't fit?," he said.

"Sadly for one in eight adults and one in three children this is a reality. Nearly 3.5 million Australians are living behind the poverty line. At Thread Together those in need are able to select clothing that suits their individual preferences, taste and circumstances which helps build confidence and self esteem, to empower people to start to rebuild their lives."

Federal Member for Bal-

arat Catherine King said people needed to be treated with dignity.

"Just because you are poor, it doesn't mean you shouldn't have RM Williams shoes or a new coat to wear," she said, speaking at the launch event.

Wendouree MP Juliana Addison said the Thread Together clothing hub could be life changing for people in need. "We need to address all the issues people are facing," she said.

"Hearing the stories as I walked in about a girl coming in and getting an outfit for her 21st. To be able to have something special to wear on your 21st is what you are going to remember. Things like that make you feel special, they make you feel worthy and they give you a sense of self confidence and the dignity you deserve.

"We know by increasing people's wellbeing they will be able to be more confident to get that new job or to re-enter study or training."

Cafs will seek support from the community to help secure ongoing funding for the Thread Together project.



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Certificate IV in Mental Health (CHC43315)	FREE TAFE	M T W T F 9.30am-4.30pm	On campus, Mt Helen
Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs (CHC43215)	FREE TAFE	M T W T F 9.30am-4.30pm	On campus, Mt Helen
Course in Introduction to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (22469VIC)	FREE TAFE	8 Weeks Short Course	Flexible, Online

Rural Sciences

Diploma of Horticulture (AHC50416)	-	M T W T F 9am - 4pm	On campus, Gillies St
Certificate III in Horticulture (AHC30716) (Gillies Street)	FREE TAFE	M T W T F 9am - 4pm	On campus, Gillies St
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Business, IT, Cyber and Accounting

Certificate IV in Cyber Security (22334VIC) October start	FREE TAFE	M T W T F Day or evening	On campus, Mt Helen
Certificate IV in Accounting and Bookkeeping (FNS40217)	FREE TAFE	M T W T F 5.30-10.00pm	On campus, Mt Helen
Diploma of Information Technology (ICT50220) 2.5 days a week	-	M T W T F 9.30am-4.30pm	On campus, Mt Helen

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Certificate II in Furniture Making (MSF20313) 10 week course	FREE TAFE	M T W T F 8.00am-4.30pm	On campus, SMB

Health

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Engineering

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