

MEDIA RELEASE

CONSOLIDATION FOR CHRISTIE CENTRE OPERATIONS

THE region's longest-serving disability service provider, the Christie Centre, is calling for community support and understanding as it seeks to consolidate its operations and secure its financial viability.

The not-for-profit community organisation will this month close three of its social enterprises: the Mildura Chocolate Company, Document Destruction service, and SPARK Kiosk.

AroundAgain, the Container Deposit Scheme and Growability Nursery will continue to operate.

"Our core business has always been to provide local support for local people," Christie Centre Executive Officer Nadiene Lynch said.

"That will not change – we are continuing to provide one-on-one personal care programs and intensive supports for around 150 participants. What will change is that we will no longer operate the Mildura Chocolate Company, the Document Destruction service, and SPARK kiosk.

"By consolidating our operations at this time, we can continue to focus on supporting local people, improve the ways we do that, and set our organization up for a strong future."

The Christie Centre has operated since 1954, providing inclusive and intensive supports for participants and their families and carers. The organization expanded into social enterprise development to offer inclusive employment and training opportunities for people of all abilities and backgrounds in the Mildura area.

The closure of these social enterprises will result in some redeployment and redundancies across the whole organisation.

Ms Lynch said consolidation activities were minimized as much as possible to limit the impact on participants and employees, while ensuring ongoing financial stability for the organization.

The complex and unpredictable National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding landscape and significant increases in costs have led to the decision to close the three enterprises.

"For example, at the Mildura Chocolate Company, the cost of cocoa rose 145% in just 18 months," Ms Lynch explained.

"Once you combine major cost increases like that with wage pressures and ongoing increasing operational costs, the chocolate we were producing was simply priced out of the market."

Christie Centre Board Chair, Ross Humphreys, said "the Christie Centre will, as always, prioritise its core role of supporting staff and participants, and looks ahead with confidence".

The Christie Centre has met with participants, families, carers and staff members this week to discuss the planned changes.

"Change can be challenging, but we are here to support each other through this," Ms Lynch said.

"If anyone has questions, queries, please reach out and talk to us. The heart of the Christie Centre is in our community and we ask that people continue to support us through using AroundAgain, the Container Deposit Scheme, and GrowAbility Nursery."

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