

MEDIA RELEASE

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To: News Editor

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Enhancing Parent-Child Relationships in Northern Corridor

The Hon Tanya Plibersek, Minister for Housing and for the Status of Women officially opened UnitingCare West's Merriwa Centre on Tuesday 30 March at 12.30pm.

This new multimillion dollar facility houses a range of programs and services, including a renowned parenting program New Parent Infant Network (NewPIN) which is a unique program and the first of its kind to be trialled in Western Australia.

Ms Plibersek congratulated UnitingCare West for its major new investment in Perth's northern suburbs where there are increasing numbers of families and individuals in need of such services and programs.

"The Merriwa Centre is an asset to the local community and UnitingCare West provides not only the NewPIN program, but also other services such as emergency relief, financial management, advocacy for disability rights, personal support services for people with mental illness, respite for aboriginal carers and intensive services for families at high risk of child abuse" Ms Plibersek said.

NewPIN is a centre-based early intervention program directed at strengthening family functioning and supporting stressed families, with particular focus on the mother-child relationship and aims to improve parenting outcomes through intensive support and education for parents of children under 5 years old.

Chief Executive Officer of UnitingCare West, Chris Hall welcomed the program to WA with high hopes following its achievements overseas.

"NewPIN has shown that it has been effective in tackling child abuse when introduced into the United Kingdom 20 years ago and the program has also had success in other Australian States.

"I am optimistic that once we have evaluated this program, we will find that NewPIN at UnitingCare West Merriwa will bring similar changes for local families" said Mr Hall.

"NewPIN provides support to parents from all walks of life and by sharing their stories with other parents they feel accepted, equal and ready to make positive changes together for the sake of their families and children" Mr Hall said.

The focus of the program is to accentuate a parent's strengths and to build a strong relationship with their child.

Attendance is voluntary and NewPIN works in a positive way to improve parenting skills, and through the use of play and personal development programs parents learn the techniques that work for them and their child.