

Good progress on early years education aims

By **ANDY BENNETT***

A MAJOR focus of the Learning Federation is to increase and enhance the range of quality early years education and care for very young children and their families.

We are doing so because there is a lot of evidence that the first few years of life are vital to helping children to achieve their potential.

Our main strategies are to develop our three primary schools as birth to grade four education centres, to build a children and family centre locally, and work collaboratively with other early childhood service providers to develop a broader and more cohesive model for supporting the families of young children.

We have made a lot of progress in that area in recent weeks.

In April some of our community's youngest learners and staff joined together to open the new early years facilities at East Derwent primary school.

The new facility includes an open classroom space with a kitchen, a large meet-



Andy Bennett

ing area, consulting rooms and two wonderful outdoor play areas that link seamlessly with the indoor areas.

Congratulations to Cunic Constructions, Gilby Vollus Architects and the staff at East Derwent who all contributed to an outstanding development.

Brooke Pepper, Cassie Jordan and Lesley Collins deserve special thanks for the work they did on setting up the rooms.

Similar projects are under way at Herdsmans Cove Primary School where the early years classrooms are in the last fitting-out stages, and at Gagebrook Primary School where construction



A major emphasis for the new Learning Federation is on early years education.

work began just before Easter.

In April a launching of the land ceremony was held to plant a sign on the site of the new Indigenous Children and Family Centre at the rear of the Brighton Civic Centre.

This small act was a significant step in establishing the centre.

The next stage of consultation and planning is now under way with community discussion groups held at the civic centre over the past two months.

Parents, local early years service providers and other interested people shared

ideas about what services the centre needs to provide and talked about what it will look like.

We aim to collate all that information into a design brief for architects and builders by the beginning of June so that construction work can begin soon after. Our target opening date is February next year.

The Children and Family Centre will be a major community asset. I encourage you to have your say in how it develops.

Please contact Cheryl Caulfield, our Aboriginal Project Development Officer,

at Herdsmans Cove Primary on 6263 7843 if you would like to be involved.

To find out more, or to stay in touch with developments, please visit our website at www.education.tas.gov.au/basmlearningfederation. Your comments are very welcome.

You can also email comments to bsm.learningfederation@education.tas.gov.au.

Andy Bennett is manager of the Bridgewater and Southern Midlands Learning Federation.

• More on Learning in My Community, page 11