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PressReader

KALAMUNDA



Fionn Skiotis, MLA John McGrath, Esther Foundation director Patricia Lavater, Premier Colin Barnett, Health Minister John Day and foundation administrator Rod Lavater turn the soil. Picture: Bruce Hunt

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Laying a new Foundation

PREMIER Colin Barnett was in Kalamunda on Friday to turn the soil for a new facility to provide supported residential accommodation for young women in need.

The Esther Foundation, which runs women's residential health, development and leadership programs, will have a 40-bed capacity in the old St Emilie's Nunnery and church at 75 Kalamunda Road.

Mr Barnett said he and his wife had become aware of the Esther Foundation in 2001 and had been supporters of their work ever since.

"This is my favourite charity so I am glad to be able to make a difference with this announcement today," he said.

"The grounds have an orchard, creek running through it, garden, and it is a beautiful setting so where better to continue God's work."

The State Government purchased

the property – formerly known as St Emilie's Convent – in 2010 for lease to the foundation as an accommodation facility.

The Esther Foundation also provides education, vocational training and support services.

"The St Emilie's project will provide housing and support to young women with a history of abuse, domestic violence, depression, self-harm or teenage pregnancy who are at risk of homelessness," Mr Barnett said.

Community Housing Limited will finance the works with a Lotterywest donation of \$3.4 million.

Esther Foundation administrator Rod Lavater said the women at the foundation would benefit enormously from the new facility.

"This location is conducive to wholeness and healing for 40 young women to come here, some with

their kids," he said.

"It will offer them a safe and supportive environment for therapy and counselling and learning."

Chair of Community Housing, Fionn Skiotis, said he was delighted to be at the site and see the work being completed for the new facility.

"Our organisation is very much at home in WA and we are working with the Department of Housing and Lotterywest on the design and construction of what will be a wonderful place to house young women," Mr Skiotis said.

Health Minister John Day was also present at the sod turning and said much of the original convent's rich heritage would be preserved in the work done.

The facility is scheduled to open in late 2017. The initial construction on the St Emilie's site dates back to the early 1880s.