

Celebrating 25 Years of Childcare at Mallee Track

Mallee Track Health and Community Service (MTHCS) celebrated a major milestone last Thursday, 23 October, marking 25 years of childcare services at Mallee Minors in Ouyen.

The event brought together past and present families, educators, and community members to reflect on the journey of the Early Years program, which has supported generations of local children and families since its beginnings in 1999.

MTHCS Early Years Manager Kyra Nathan said the celebration was a wonderful opportunity to recognise the service's growth and the people who made it possible.

"It was a privilege to hear the stories from the very first child enrolment and how the service has progressed over the 25 years, from staff who were there on day one, and are still with us now, Lisa Bursill, Bev Cummings and Helen McGregor," Ms Nathan said.

From its humble beginnings, the Early Years program has expanded significantly, with Mallee Track now operating Early Years Centres in Ouyen, Manangatang, Sea Lake, Underbool, and Murrayville.

"The service provides vital childcare and education opportunities for local families, allowing parents to work and children to learn, play and thrive in safe, supportive environments. People have moved back to the area because of our great services and infrastructure, it gives a strong sense of belonging and builds confidence in what the community has to offer young families.", shared Lyndal Munro Mallee Track's Director of Community Services.

Early Years Educator Lisa Bursill reflected on the rewarding nature of the work and the strong community connections built over the years.

"It's such a joy to watch them grow, and today we are being visited by parents' past and present. We get to see these children go on to primary school, high school, university – and then return to us with their own children. It's very special.", Lisa Bursill said.

The anniversary was a heartfelt celebration of dedication, community spirit, and the enduring impact of quality early childhood education across the Mallee.



From left to right: Bev Cummings, Lisa Bursill, Helen McGregor



Wonderful cake created by Tamika Jacobs and enjoyed by all!

Launch of A.R.M. – Augmented Reality Murrayville bringing Reed Street’s history back to life through immersive storytelling.

In Murrayville, VIC there is a unique cultural heritage project which will officially launch on Friday 21 November: A.R.M (Augmented Reality Murrayville), an immersive experience that brings the town’s historic Reed Street to life through interactive storytelling.

Once a bustling high street of cafés, bakers, butchers and blacksmiths, Reed Street today is a quiet remnant of its past. Although the original shopfronts remain, most are long closed. Local artist and conservator Morrison Polkinghorne has transformed these façades into living heritage portals using augmented reality, reconnecting the buildings with the voices, photographs and objects of the people who once filled them.

“These buildings are more than architecture, they’re memory,” Polkinghorne said. “Once they’re gone, they’re gone forever. A.R.M gives them a second life by letting visitors walk past the old shops and see and hear their stories again.”



NHH Murrayville Coordinator Morrison Polkinghorne trying out the Augmented Reality app

The project began with a physical restoration of the shopfront displays, starting with the old chemist, using original items sourced from the Murrayville Museum and private collections. As the community saw the transformation, residents began contributing photographs, memorabilia, and handwritten recollections. The project has since grown to include recorded oral histories from long-term locals, now woven into the AR experience.

“The technology might be digital, but the heart of the project is deeply local,” Morrison said. “It’s become a collaborative act of remembering, past and present working together.”

A.R.M currently features three augmented reality start points, each marked by a QR code:

1. Reed Street Shops
2. The Old Post Office
3. The Mallee Highway opposite the Murrayville Pub

Visitors simply scan a QR code with their smartphone to begin the experience. Travellers already passing through have responded with enthusiasm: one couple travelling from Tasmania to Darwin spent half an hour walking the street, captivated by the stories layered over the town’s architecture.



Historical Reed Street

Launch of A.R.M. – Augmented Reality Murrayville bringing Reed Street's history back to life through immersive storytelling cont ...

Launch Details

Date: Friday 21 November

Time: Drop-in between 4:00pm – 7:00pm

Location: Murrayville, Victoria (Reed Street + AR start points)

Bring: A smartphone with charge

“Projects like A.R.M show exactly what a Neighbourhood House is all about, community connection, creativity and collaboration,” said Kim Darley, Rural Connection Team Leader, MTHCS. “The Murrayville Neighbourhood House has brought together locals of all ages to share memories, stories and artefacts, turning them into something that celebrates the town’s history. It’s a wonderful example of how regional communities can use innovation to keep their history alive.”

Dr Frances Peart, CEO Mallee Track Health and Community Service said, “A.R.M is both cultural preservation and creative tourism, reanimating rural history through innovation and community memory. These kinds of projects are essential for injecting life and energy into smaller town main streets; and to have the community participate in such a way is essential in building goodwill and identity.”



Murrayville residents and Neighbourhood House Coordinator Morrison Polkinghorne in Reed Street Murrayville



Murrayville residents using A.R.M. in Reed Street



Historical Reed Street