

Extra care for Canberra's kids

PARENTS of children in formal child care are increasingly concerned about staffing ratios and the quality of care their children receive, says Natalie Colburt, co-owner of the new Majura Park Child Care Centre.

Natalie established the business in Canberra while expecting her daughter Eleanor, now three-and-a-half months old, driven by a need to find her a suitable position, and a desire for top-quality care.

"There's such great demand in Canberra for good child care services, especially for under three-year-olds," Natalie told "CityNews".

"When I started looking around for a place, in early pregnancy, all I could find was massive waiting lists for the centres that were convenient!"

Natalie and her sister-in-law Fiona Keyes, a career child carer, decided to open the centre to cater for growing demand for high-quality care, including places for babies, in the ACT.

The centre is located at the new Majura Park office complex near the airport, to cater for the growing number of workers in this area.

"Everybody's so busy these days, and with mums and dads both working the last thing they need to do is worry about whether their children are being well looked after all day."

Natalie says that one way the Majura Park Child Care Centre focuses on children's needs is that it has increased the number of supervising staff in each area, rather than simply providing what is required by legislation.

"A key indicator of quality care is the staffing ratio," she explains. "We want to offer a five-star

service, and that means that at all times the children's needs must come first."

Staffing ratios have been in the news of late, with Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Child Care Maxine McKew, children's author Mem Fox and "Baby Love" author (and registered nurse, midwife and parentcraft nurse) Robin Barker all highlighting the need for better ratios.

Natalie says the activities and educational opportunities available to children are equally important.

"We're more than just a child care service: We have preschool teachers on staff and we would like to develop a fully independent preschool in the future.

"For now, we are planning French language activities, maths and science activities and a focus on phonics development: it's a full educational experience for children."

For under-fives learning is all about fun – and so the six rooms are fully fitted out to make learning enjoyable. The pirate ship installed in one of the three custom-built outdoor play areas is already a favourite among children who have visited the new centre, Natalie says.

Food is prepared fresh daily. "We have a qualified chef who prepares fresh food from scratch, even pasta and ice cream, on the premises each day."

Children and babies aged six weeks to five years are accepted by the centre, which is now enrolling ready for its opening on Monday, June 1.

Hours are from 7.30am to 5.45pm.

For more information call 6257 7100 or visit www.majuraparkchildcare.com.au.



Majura Park Childcare Centre owner Fiona Keyes, left, and Natalie Colbert, with daughter Eleanor... "We have a qualified chef who prepares food from scratch, even pasta and ice cream, on the premises every day," says Natalie.

Grand Opening Celebrations

Saturday May 30, 10.30 until 12.30

EVERYONE'S INVITED!

The ribbon to the pirate ship will be cut at 11am

Majura Park Childcare

Phone 6257 7100 or visit www.majuraparkchildcare.com.au
Ground Floor, 1 Wellington Place, Majura Park Office Complex at Canberra Airport

