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# Child care closed

by FAYE MICHELSON

LACK of funds has forced the closure of Ringwood Community Childcare Centre.

The centre has battled since opening 20 years ago.

Management Committee president Sally-Ann Salter said the centre, at 40 Warrandyte Rd, Ringwood, had a history of funding problems and constantly struggled to make ends meet.

"When the centre opened there were very few other facilities like it in the area. Now there are 26 child care centres in Maroondah, so it was becoming difficult for us to fill vacancies," Ms Salter said.

"At the end of last year, 17 of our children left because they were starting school, so this year we had to fill all those vacancies. That, combined with the financial problems, made us realise that any solution was just 'band aid' as we couldn't see the funding situation changing in the long term."

The centre was started by a group of parents in February 1977 as an occasional childcare service. It developed over the years to offer full and part time child care in addition to the occasional care.

It provided 34 places, and employed four full-time staff and four part-time staff.

Ms Salter said the centre closed on March 27. A 'wake' was held to celebrate its two decades of service and was attended by about 60 past and present users



**End of an era:** from left, former staff member of 17 years Anne Wilkins, president Sally-Ann Salter with Timothy, 3, and director Lee Nolan, with Andrew, 5 months.

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and committee members of the centre.

"It was a sad day, because a lot of people have been associated with the centre over the years, and a lot of people have an emotional attachment to it," she said.

Many community-based child care centres receive the Federal Government's

operational subsidy, although Ms Salter said the Ringwood Community Child Care Centre had never had this funding. The subsidy - up to \$40,000 a year for a 35-place centre - will be cut in July.

She said community-based child care centres would find it very difficult

to operate without the subsidy.

"It's a shame because centres like ours are non-profit and so have no self interest," she said.

"They provide a family-type environment, and because they have smaller groups, there is more one-on-one interaction with

for the children and lots of attention paid to detail."

St Paul's Anglican Church will hold a thanksgiving service for the work achieved by staff and committee of the Ringwood Child Care Centre on May 18 at 10am.

For further information contact 9879 2434.