

New Aboriginal centre

Archbishop Hickey calls for volunteers to aid First Aussies

■ By Sylvia Defendi

Over 300 people are expected to attend the up-coming launch of new Aboriginal advocacy centre, Daydawn on March 29.

An initiative of Archbishop Barry Hickey, Daydawn Advocacy Centre will be opened with the blessing of the building in Perth as well as a traditional smoke ceremony performed by Aboriginal elder Morton Hansen.

The building is owned by the Aboriginal Advancement Council of WA and will now be rented for the new agency's use.

Daydawn coordinator Julie Williams said the launch had particular significance,

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A great turnout: Our Lady of the Mission Whitford celebrates Chinese New Year.

PHOTO: PAULINE EGAN

Advocacy booster

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as it will be celebrated during the 40th anniversary year of the 1967 referendum, which granted all indigenous people Australian citizenship and transferred responsibility for Aboriginal affairs from the States to the Commonwealth.

Daydawn, which will be staffed mainly by volunteers, recently welcomed potential volunteers for a training day on February 9, with at least 25 people attending.

Mercy Sister Dolores Coffey RSM, who has worked for many years with indigenous Canadians, has been enlisted as director of the new agency.

"I'm hoping it will help with some of the key aspects to liaising with government and non-government agencies, networking with Aboriginal leaders, assisting with legal matters and linking margin-

alised groups with decision makers," Sr Coffey said.

Personal counselling and referrals will become available, and the centre will also look at Church submissions on Aboriginal matters and Catholic Church policy in relations with Aboriginal people.

It will also aim to promote social reconciliation and knowledge of Ngoongar language and culture.

Archbishop Hickey said the new agency would seek to have a voice in Aboriginal policy decisions, both at government and Church levels.

"As a Catholic agency it will work closely with our Aboriginal Ministry and Council to bring about reconciliation and full Aboriginal participation in our parishes and organisations, as Pope John Paul called for at Alice Springs 20 years ago," he said.