

# MEDIA RELEASE



11 June 2019

## Leading child welfare agency, OzChild expands its service delivery to support vulnerable children in Melbourne's West.

Founded in 1851 OzChild has been working hard ever since to ensure all children and young people are safe, respected, nurtured and reach their full potential.

From 1 June 2019 OzChild's footprint has been significantly increased as the agency has taken over from The Salvo's in one of Melbourne's most rapidly growing areas, the west.

For more than 30 years OzChild has been providing foster and kinship care support within the City of Greater Dandenong, supporting 200 foster care households throughout Victoria's Southern Region and many hundreds of kinship children and families each year.

"This is important to OzChild. Expanding our services to reach more vulnerable children and young people across a greater geographical area is now seeing OzChild move into Western Melbourne," says Chief Executive Officer, Dr Lisa J. Griffiths.

"Until recently The Salvation Army's Westcare agency was providing home-based care services with approximately 70 placements. I acknowledge the hard work and dedication the Westcare team have shown over many years and thank them for working closely with our team to ensure a smooth transition for the children and carers. I look forward to building on their legacy to improve outcomes for children and young people," says Dr Griffiths.

In addition to continuing this support, in an Australian first OzChild will also be implementing the KEEP® model, providing greater support for carers in western Melbourne. KEEP® is an evidence-based support and skill enhancement education program for foster and kinship care parents of children aged 5-12 which promotes child well-being and prevents placement breakdown.

"This program focuses on delivering practical, research-based parenting techniques with each session tailored to the specific needs, circumstances and priorities of participating parents and children. The program will be a game changer for both foster parents and children, with an aim to reduce placement disruptions and behavioural and emotional problems in children whilst strengthening the skills of foster parents which will reduce the number dropping out of foster care," explains Dr Griffiths.

In Victoria more than 10,000 children and young people are currently placed in Out-of-Home Care. The reasons are often complex and varied, but the challenge of recruiting foster carers or placing children into a kinship care arrangement remains.

“Our in-home care team supports hundreds of children and young people throughout Victoria’s Southern Region and now a further 70 in the Western Division and I have no doubt that number will grow. While foster care can be challenging at times, the rewards can be life changing. I encourage anyone wanting to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable children in your local community to reach out to our team, with so many kids in need carers are in high demand,” says Dr Griffiths.

**-ENDS-**

- Dr Lisa J. Griffiths is available for interview upon request.

### **Who can become a foster carer?**

- Anyone over the age of 21.
- Anyone with secure accommodation and appropriate space in the home.
- Race, gender, marital status, employment, sexuality and religion do not affect a person’s eligibility to become a foster carer.

### **OzChild provides full training and on-going support to all carers.**

- 24/7 Case Manager and after hours support.
- Respite Support.
- Ongoing training opportunities.
- Community building events and access to other social events.

### **ABOUT OZCHILD**

For nearly 170 years OzChild has been committed to delivering quality services which make a real and lasting difference to Australian families to ensure all children and young people are safe, respected and nurtured to reach their full potential.

OzChild is committed to improving the lives of at-risk children, young people and families in our community, through foster and kinship care support and the delivery of evidence-based programs to achieve better outcomes, strengthen and repair relationships to build a brighter future for young Victorians.

**For further information please contact:**

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