

More than ever before National Child Protection Week reminds us that every child, in every community, needs the opportunity to thrive, be safe and be loved.

- **All children are facing increasing challenges due to the changes in their lives in response to COVID.**
- **Vulnerable children are particularly at risk given the increased isolation they are experiencing.**
- **Already there are approximately 11,000 children and young people in Victoria’s foster and residential care system and more than 46,000 nationally¹.**
- **Based on trend analysis, and research conducted by Social Ventures Australia Limited (SVA Consulting) it is anticipated Victoria will have 27,500 children in out-of-home care by 2026².**
- **1,620 children and young people are in foster care while 6,817 are cared for by a relative or family friend (kinship carer)¹.**
- **According to AIHW data during 2019-20, in Victoria 596 foster care households exited while only 354 commenced care – a cause for great concern when considering the increase in children and young people entering care.**

This year the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) is calling for fair treatment for all Australian children, by ensuring every family and community has what kids need to thrive and be healthy.

Protecting children is everyone’s business sadly, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare’s Child Protection Australia report, more than 174,000 children received child protection services in Australia during 2019-20.

“Way too many Australian children required child protection services last year, and more than half were repeat clients. It is imperative we focus on putting children first through greater investment in evidence-based programs, it is the only way we will see better outcomes being achieved,” says OzChild Chief Executive Officer, Dr Lisa Griffiths.

“Turning the tide on the number of children receiving child protection services starts with delivering programs that intervene early, this is our greatest chance at keeping children out of residential care or the foster care system, breaking the cycle of disadvantage so many of these kids face,” says Dr Griffiths.

“Family and foster carers are vital when children cannot stay safely at home, but Covid has placed additional stressors on families, the out-of-home care system, and carers. Foster carers are exiting the system at alarming rates. We cannot continue to rely on the recruitment of carers to solve the child protection crisis.

¹ AIHW Child Protection Report 2019-2020

² Keeping families together through COVID-19: the strengthened case for early intervention in Victoria’s child protection and out-of-home care system - Social Ventures Australia Limited (SVA Consulting)

“The predicted increase in kids entering out-of-home care presents a very real challenge as members of the broader community who make up the foster caring population also emerge from the effects of the pandemic on their own families, their wellbeing and ability to care,” adds Dr Griffiths.

With more children expected to enter care, evidence-based models like Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO) will be in high demand. TFCO provides wrap around support, a whole team of professionals available 24/7 to coach and equip carers with the skills to manage children who have experienced child abuse and neglect.

More investment is needed to provide this support and OzChild calls on the Victorian Government to commit increased funds to evidence-based programs with proven outcomes for children and families.

Programs like Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect, Functional Family Therapy, Child Welfare and SafeCare are internationally tried and tested programs that can help children stay safely at home with their families. For children who can't remain at home, programs like TFCO and KEEP can help them find a loving and stable home with foster carers.

As the COVID Delta strain places additional stressors on families and communities National Child Protection Week provides a timely reminder for all of us to do what we can to keep all children safe, especially those who experience additional challenges.

National Child Protection Week runs 5 – 11 September 2021

-ENDS-

For media interviews, images, or further information:

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Interview opportunity:

- OzChild Chief Executive Officer, Dr Lisa J. Griffiths is available for interview or comment about the need for greater investment in programs targeted at early intervention and prevention within the child welfare sector.
- Estelle Paterson, Director – Qld and SA, is available for interview to discuss the TFCO program and outcomes being achieved for children and young people.
- OzChild carers are available to share their experiences upon request.

ABOUT OZCHILD

For 170 years, OzChild has been committed to improving the lives of children, young people and families who are experiencing significant challenges, by strengthening families, providing healing, and preventing abuse and neglect.

OzChild's vision is that all children and young people are safe, respected, nurtured and reach their full potential.

OzChild is now the largest provider of evidence-based and evidence-informed programs in Australia. Nationally the organisation is delivering multiple evidence-based programs to support children, young people and families, to ensure better outcomes can be achieved.

This includes Treatment Foster Care Oregon, Functional Family Therapy - Child Welfare, Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect, Functional Family Therapy for at risk youth, SafeCare, Multisystemic Therapy for Youth Justice, and Triple P Positive Parenting Program.

- *SafeCare* – a structured training program to help parents of young children at risk of neglect and abuse.
- *Functional Family Therapy, Child Welfare* – a program that works with children, young people and their family or kin to address problems that may result in the child or young person entering out-of-home care.
- *Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST)* – an intensive family and community-based program that focuses on addressing anti-social behaviour in young people.
- *MST-Child Abuse and Neglect* – an in-home intervention model which works with families who have come to the attention of child protection services due to high risk and safety issues.
- *Treatment Foster Care Oregon* – a foster care model for children and young people who have problems with chronic antisocial behaviour, emotional disturbance, and delinquency.

MORE ABOUT TREATMENT FOSTER CARE OREGON

Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO) is a specialised foster care program based on over 40 years of international evidence and research that improves behaviours in children and young people.

Three versions of the TFCO model are available, targeting discrete cohorts of children and young people identified by age. A family-based model of care and therapy, the program supports up to seven (7) placements simultaneously. Delivered in the specialist foster carers home, each placement is for a period of approximately 9-12 months with the objective of returning the graduating child or young person to a stable care environment with family or kin.

A cost benefit analysis undertaken by KPMG of TFCO found an **estimated return of \$2.99 for every \$1 invested** (KPMG – An evidence-based continuum of care and support for child and family services (Final Report September 2016))

For every \$1.00 spent on TFCO treatment compared to usual care, there is a **benefit of \$3.15** at 4.5 years, when considering child welfare and criminal justice involvement (Treatment Foster Care Oregon <https://www.tfcOregon.com/evidence/>).