



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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# **Putting Families in Brimbank Melton First**

**Families in the Brimbank Melton community will receive individual support making it easier for them to access services specific to their needs thanks to a new partnership announced by the Victorian Government.**

Minister for Child Protection and Family Services Anthony Carbines, together with Minister for Corrections, Crime Prevention, Youth Justice, and Victim Support Natalie Hutchins announced the launch of the Putting Families First (PFF) initiative in March, which will support families with some of the most complex needs to help them to stay safe, strong, and together.

Led by OzChild, this community driven response will see Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), Australian African Foundation for Retention and Opportunity (AAFRO), Charis Youth and Community, and Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS), work together to intensively support families who come into contact with both child protection and justice systems to enable sustained positive changes in their lives.

Chief Executive Officer at OzChild, Dr Lisa J. Griffiths said all members of the Putting Families First partnership are committed to improving the safety, health and wellbeing of young people, and families by connecting them to the right support at the right time, making it easier for them to access services that are specific to their individual needs.

Support through this joint initiative will be provided for families with multiple needs across health and social services, with the program set to begin helping families within weeks. An estimated 180 families will be supported through this initial trial funded by the state government as part of the Better, Connected Care and Roadmap for Reform initiatives.

“For families who have been involved with the child protection and justice systems support that aims to build their skills to improve family relationships, improve school attendance rates, maintain secure housing, and connect them to their community, training and employment is vital to breaking the cycle of disadvantage so often experienced,” said Dr Griffiths.

All consortium members are well-respected service providers who have established long-standing relationships within the Brimbank Melton region.

Of significant value and integral to the success of the Putting Families First program is the experience of VACCA, AAFRO and Charis who are dedicated to servicing the needs of Aboriginal, African and Pasifika communities. These strong community-based links will ensure families and young people are culturally connected with local initiatives and activities to help avoid further contact with child protection and justice services.

## Quotes attributed to Putting Families First Partnership agency members

*“The future we envisage for Victorian families inspires us as a collective to do more and is why we are focused on delivering a service that includes a relational approach and promotes practice that is child and family-centered, acknowledging that children and young people, and their families are experts in their own lives.”* Andrew Bruun, Chief Executive Officer, YSAS

*“Reduced offending, improving child and parental health and increased school attendance rates are just some of the many positive outcomes we will see by centralising support via the Putting Families First initiative.”* Mamadou Diamanka, Chief Executive Officer, AAFRO

*“Investment into this program shows a real commitment from the Victorian Government to create equal opportunities for all Victorians to live a safe, respected, and valued life, we are proud to play such a significant part in that.”* Tia Suemai, Executive Director, Charis Youth and Community

### Key points about the program:

- By linking with a family worker and community connector, the Putting Families First program will help families access legal, financial, mental health, housing and family violence services and other supports.
- Working together PFF strives to build strong families and communities – with individual family members who are safe, healthy, and well, and parents who are supported to create a safe and nurturing home environment for their children.
- Putting Families First has established a clear referral pathway for families who are suitable for support by the program in partnership with Youth Justice, Corrections Victoria and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.
- The trial is a joint initiative between the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and the Department of Justice and Community Safety.

### Putting Families First is committed to:

- working in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to advance self-determination around decision making and culturally safe care for Aboriginal children and families.
- meaningful specialised support for African, Pasifika and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.
- reducing a family’s need for acute services.
- working in partnership with allied services, forming meaningful working relationships that foster warm referrals and has families being connected with services to meet their individual needs.

For further information please contact:

Rebecca Swinton, Communications Manager, OzChild

03 9695 2230 / 0439 472 281

OzChild National Support Office  
PO Box 1312, South Melbourne VIC 3205 Australia  
T: + 61 3 9695 2200 E: [hello@ozchild.org.au](mailto:hello@ozchild.org.au)  
[ozchild.org.au](http://ozchild.org.au)