

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**2 September 2022**



### **While National Child Protection Week reminds us that every child, in every community, deserves a fair go, parents must be afforded the same right.**

National Child Protection Week is by far one of the most important weeks on the calendar, well, at least it should be.

Protecting children is everyone's business, but sadly unless you're exposed to the statistics, are familiar with the rising number of children and young people receiving child protection services, the magnitude of the problem is understood by very few Australians.

The need for a dedicated week that focuses on child protection should be enough for all Australians to stand up and say, enough is enough, we must and we can do better when it comes to protecting our most vulnerable. Endless reports, Royal Commissions, and shocking headlines tell us what has been done is not working.

The child and family welfare sector has evolved over the years and the use of evidence-based, tried, and tested interventions is gaining momentum, but there is still a great deal of work to do.

Parents must be given a fair go so children have every chance to thrive and be healthy. OzChild Chief Executive Officer, Dr Lisa J. Griffiths would like to see greater support for parents, support that is accessible and focuses on whole of family treatment.

"Across Australia many parents are struggling with mental ill health, unhealthy addictions and relationships, domestic and family violence and poor health and access to services that can treat them," says Dr Griffiths.

"For too long our child protection system has broken families apart into silos, sending parents in different directions and separating children from them under the guise of protecting children," adds Dr Griffiths.

"What if, instead of failing these kids so catastrophically, we intervene much earlier, we truly listen to what parents, children and families say they need to succeed and look at what the research and evidence tells us works. A child protection system alone cannot keep children safe, if we truly want to protect children, we need to protect and support the adults in their lives, with the right support, at the right time," says Dr Griffiths.

OzChild is calling on all governments, across Australia to invest in early intervention and prevention, evidence-based models that focus on treating families together. We all want the best possible service system for children, young people, and families in need and that system must include solutions that are evidence-based.

“I want to imagine a world where we don’t need a week called Child Protection Week, a world where parents have the capacity to keep their children safe and happy in their care. I would like to work my way out of a job, out of the lives of families and children because they don’t need a child protection system,” says Dr Griffiths.

*National Child Protection Week runs 4 – 10 September 2022*

**According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Child Protection Australia 2020-21 report:**

- Australia's child protection system provided services to 1 in 32 children aged less than 18 years in 2020–21
- At 30 June 2021, more than 46,200 children in out-of-home care, a 7.3% increase from 30 June 2017 when the number of children was approximately 43,100. At 30 June 2021, 91% were in a home-based care placement and 68% had been continuously in out-of-home care for 2 years or more.
- Nearly 49,700 children were subject to substantiated abuse or neglect. Emotional abuse (55%) was the most common primary type of abuse or neglect substantiated through investigations in 2020–21. This was followed by neglect (21%), physical abuse (14%), and sexual abuse (10%)
- 1 in 17 Indigenous children (around 19,500) were in out-of-home care at 30 June 2021, almost two-thirds (63%) of whom were living with relatives, kin or other Indigenous caregivers.

**-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 evidence-based models targeted at early intervention and prevention within the child and family welfare sector.

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## **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.

## **ABOUT DR. GRIFFITHS**

Dr Lisa J. Griffiths is the Chief Executive Officer at OzChild, Victoria's longest-running child welfare organisation and Australia's largest provider of evidence-based programs in child protection, family violence and youth justice.

Lisa has a Doctor of Business Leadership, researching evidence-based ethical leadership models for the community services sector and teaches the principles of Evidence-Based Leadership across Australia.