

Media Release

The Hon Luke Donnellan MP
Minister for Child Protection
Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers



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EARLY SUPPORT TO HELP FAMILIES STAY TOGETHER

The Victorian Government is helping more families stay together through evidence-based early intervention programs.

Minister for Child Protection Luke Donnellan today announced the Government will provide a further \$2 million a year to community service organisation OzChild to deliver personalised support to children and young adults and their families in Goulburn and outer eastern Melbourne.

The program – known as Functional Family Therapy – provides intensive assistance to keep children and young people at home when it is safe to do so. Experts work with the family and community to strengthen relationships by building skills to manage challenging behaviours and situations.

Five years after Victoria's first pilot began, more than 800 families across Australia have now successfully completed the program with OzChild, with 95 percent of children and young people remaining with their families in the last 12 months.

Functional Family Therapy is part of a suite of evidence-based programs specifically designed for children at risk of entry to care, as part of the Government's \$335 million investment in earlier intervention initiatives under the *Roadmap for Reform: Strong families, Safe children*, announced in the *Victorian Budget 2020/21*.

This includes the new Family Preservation and Reunification Response model of evidence-based intensive early intervention, providing families with support to prevent children entering care where possible, or to support a child in care to return safely home.

The Government is ensuring all children are given the same opportunities in life through a massive \$1.2 billion boost to the children and families system in this year's Budget – on top of the unprecedented \$1 billion in last year's Budget that is providing more support than ever before for at-risk children, their families and carers.

Victoria has the lowest rate of children in out of home care in Australia, at six in every 1,000. Where children require alternative care, Victoria also has the highest rate of kinship care with nearly 80 per cent of our children and young people placed with family members.

To find out more about Government programs that protect children, visit services.dffh.vic.gov.au/families-and-children.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Child Protection Luke Donnellan

"Nothing is more important than giving our most vulnerable children the stability, care and support they need."

"We are investing in prevention and early intervention to ensure families can get the help they need early and have the best chance to stay together – before problems escalate."

"Supporting families to stay together – when it is appropriate to do so – delivers the best long-term outcomes for children to lead happy, healthy lives."

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