

# Media Release

**The Hon Jenny Mikakos MLC**  
Minister for Families and Children  
Minister for Early Childhood Education  
Minister for Youth Affairs



Getting Things Done.  
Making Things Fair.

Tuesday, 10 April, 2018

## LOOKING OUT FOR SIBLINGS IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE

The Andrews Labor Government is introducing a new program to ensure siblings in out-of-home care remain together or in contact wherever possible.

The Keeping Connected program is the first of its kind in Australia and is aimed at maintaining the bond between siblings by ensuring they are kept together when in care.

On average, 75 per cent of children who go into care in Victoria are placed with one or more of their siblings, but Keeping Connected is focused on bridging the gap.

The \$1.5 million program recognises the importance of keeping children together to provide a stable environment for their continued wellbeing, including links to community and culture, and places a priority on their mental health.

The program – being delivered by Uniting Victoria and Tasmania (Uniting) in Melbourne’s south – has introduced dedicated emergency carers available only for sibling placements.

This new program also supports continued, meaningful contact between siblings who can’t be placed together, with 180 sibling groups estimated to be supported throughout the trial.

Integrated into the program, Alfred Health Children and Youth Mental Health Service will provide therapeutic support for children via a dedicated mobile clinician.

Additional training and support will be given to carers, birth families, child protection and other professionals to support the stability of the sibling placements.

Keeping Connected reinforces the Labor Government's commitment to Aboriginal self-determination and self-management with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency responsible for operating the service for Aboriginal children.

This new service is being implemented as part of the Labor Government’s *Roadmap for Reform: Strong Families, Safe Children* to test new or strengthened approaches to better support children and young people in Out-of-Home Care.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Families and Children Jenny Mikakos

*“A safe home and a sense of security is what every child deserves – and keeping siblings together is a big part of that.”*

*“By nurturing and maintaining sibling contact, we know children are better able to lead healthy, safe and happy lives. It makes a big difference to their lives and the role of their carers.”*