

Statement from MacKillop Family Services in response to Victoria's new family violence prevention campaign

MacKillop Family Services (MacKillop) welcomes the Victorian Government's new family violence prevention campaign *Respect Each Other: Call It Out*, launched on Monday 11 May.

MacKillop supports many families in Victoria who have been impacted by family violence, causing long-term trauma for children as well as driving homelessness, drug and alcohol issues and continued pressure on our hospital system.

Dr Robyn Miller, CEO of MacKillop hopes the new state government initiative will offer immediate assistance for parents and children experiencing family violence and encourage those struggling but not yet experiencing violence to reach out now.

"It is imperative that those who are experiencing family violence know there are safe alternatives available. Many children who are isolated at home and not at school are at their most vulnerable right now when their usual support system is not in place.

"Families who are under stress should seek support early. There are support programs and advice available for those at risk of family violence, you do not need to wait for violence to occur to seek help.

"Our fear is that in a few months' time, the consequence of family violence, which we know surges at times of social isolation and financial pressure, will see a rise in the number of children who will be unable to live safely at home. This will put added pressure on child protection measures and on the foster care system at a time when we are already dealing with a critical shortage of foster carers," added Dr Miller.

(Also see attached media release from MacKillop Family Services of the impact of COVID-19 on foster care.)

About MacKillop Family Services

MacKillop Family Services supports over 6,400 families across Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia, many of which have experienced family violence. We care for children unable to live at home, and support over 1100 foster carers to nurture these children in their own homes. Our programs include: Family support and family therapy; Early intervention and parenting support; Foster care; Residential care; Youth homelessness services; Specialist education services; Disability support; Grief, loss and trauma support; and Multicultural playgroups.

MacKillop is the largest provider of residential care and 90% of young people entering MacKillop residential care have experienced severe family violence.

Find out more at www.mackillop.org.au

About Dr. Robyn Miller

Robyn is a social worker and family therapist with over thirty years' experience in the community sector, local government and child protection. She was a senior clinician and teacher for fourteen years at the Bouverie Family Therapy Centre, La Trobe University, where she worked directly with families who experienced trauma and sexual abuse. From 2006-15 she provided professional leadership as the Chief Practitioner within the Department of Human Services in Victoria, and she subsequently worked as a consultant to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Robyn has been CEO of MacKillop Family Services since 2016.