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MEDIA RELEASE

Launch of inaugural home-based Carer Strategy

The Foster Care Association of Victoria (FCAV) congratulates Minister Luke Donnellan and the Victorian Government on the launch of the first ever home-based Carer Strategy: *Strong carers, stronger children*.

In Victoria, there are about 6,500 carers who open their homes to care for kids in need of a safe and nurturing home. Every day, there are more than 9,800 children living with a kinship, foster and permanent carer.

This strategy sets out key goals to truly support and improve the often challenging experiences of Victoria's dedicated carers, while also benefitting the lives and futures of the children and young people they care for.

Minister Donnellan said at the launch: "This is the first time a Carer strategy has been devised... It is common knowledge that for too long foster, kinship and permanent carers have gone unacknowledged, not supported enough and undervalued."

The FCAV strongly advocated for the development of the targeted strategy to respond to gaps in the delivery of needs for foster, kinship and permanent carers. Those gaps included supports around adequate allowance payments to care for the child, access to identification documents such as birth certificates and Medicare cards and proper training.

This workplan is a step towards filling those gaps, but it still needs to be fully funded.

"We call on the Victorian Government to prioritise funding Child Protection as a whole and include full funding to this workplan to better support our carers of children in home-based care, as a matter of urgency," FCAV CEO Sam Hauge said.

FCAV members and those they care for have called for these measures for a long time. Here is some of their feedback on their own situations.

Luke Sapwell, care leaver and Treasurer, FCAV Board:

"I was the only kid in the class who would handwrite my assignments. I recognise now what all of this meant. At the time it was just the way things were. I often think back to those years and can't help but wonder... what if (my carer) Lorraine had been offered a little more support?

Support where she had the opportunity to learn & grow herself, where she had the opportunity to feel as though she was becoming a better carer, where she could proudly purchase a computer and pin up a computer roster so all of us 6 growing foster kids could turn up to school with a typed out assignment. I was often left wondering and still wonder why things had to be so tough for Lorraine who had selflessly offered to look



after some of the country's most vulnerable kids at a time when she was so vulnerable herself."

Agapi Markogiannakis, carer and FCAV member:

"I have been a foster carer for 18 years, we've spoken about these issues since I started and I have seen little change and in some areas things are getting much worse. I am trying to remain optimistic that the reform strategy will address many of these issues. The philosophical ideals are great and I think the current gap between where we are now and where we want to be is extreme. It is urgent now and it's time to take concrete actions. This strategy needs to be given top priority and given significant funding and resources to overhaul the system."

The strategy, which aims to be implemented over the next five years, is available at:
www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/strong-carers-stronger-children

The FCAV is pleased to have played a leading role in assisting with the development of the Carer strategy which is an important plank in the Victorian Government's Roadmap for Reform. Read the *FCAV Carer Strategy Discussion Paper 2018* here
www.fcav.org.au/news/carers-strategy-discussion-paper

For all media enquiries please contact the Foster Care Association of Victoria

Luke Sapwell – Care Leaver and FCAV Treasurer of the Board - 0431 737 898

Agapi Markogiannakis – Foster Carer - 0405 169 050

Samantha Hauge, CEO - 0417 149 577

Anna Viola, Media Communications - 0411 896 730

Rowan Pulford, Project Officer Carer Strategy Development – 9416 4292