

Media release
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Ombudsman's Report prompts interest from new foster carers

Enquiries to Victoria's Foster Care Hotline have increased five fold in the two days since the release of the *Ombudsman's Investigation into Out of Home Care*.

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, which operates the Hotline, receives an average of four enquiries a day from people interested in becoming carers.

But in the 24 hours following the report's release, 21 people contacted the Hotline to ask how they could become foster carers.

Centre chief executive Dr Lynette Buoy said the reaction from the public was encouraging and reflected the concerns over the needs of the state's most vulnerable children.

With a shortage of around 1000 carers across the state, appropriate levels of remuneration, support, training, and respite services are desperately required.

"We also remain concerned about how some of the negative findings in the report were going to affect the majority of wonderful carers we have out there," Dr Buoy said.

"With people out in the community who do care enough to think about opening their homes, and going as far as picking up the phone, we feel encouraged."

However she warned that enquiries do not immediately lead to carers, in fact the transition rate is very low, making enquiries even more important.

"Experience has told us that less than 10 per cent of people enquiring about becoming foster carers actually go on to become accredited carers, again indicating there is much to do to improve the systems that support this critical role."

The Foster Care Hotline is 1800 013 088 or visit www.fosterabrighterfuture.com.au

**For media enquiries:
Dr Lynette Buoy, Chief Executive Officer
Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare
Phone 0407 702 975**