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MEDIA RELEASE

Foundation to help prevent carbon monoxide deaths

Bereaved Shepparton mother Vanessa Robinson today the launched The Chase and Tyler Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation that will work to reduce the risk of deaths and illness caused by carbon monoxide poisoning.

The Foundation is named in honour of Robinson's two sons, aged eight and six, who died in May 2010 after being poisoned by a faulty gas wall heater in their rented Shepparton home.

Together with partners Origin and Energy Safe Victoria, The Chase and Tyler Foundation will work to raise awareness of carbon monoxide poisoning and help Victorians manage the risk by providing them with simple, clear and practical information.

The Foundation will also lobby for change to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning caused by faulty or un-serviced gas heaters and fuel burning appliances, particularly for those living in rented accommodation.

Speaking at the launch at Melbourne Museum, Ms Robinson urged Victorians to have gas heaters serviced a minimum of every two years to avoid another tragedy like the one that claimed the lives of Chase and Tyler.

"Carbon monoxide is a silent killer that took the lives of my young sons. You can't see it, taste it or smell it – faulty or un-serviced gas heaters can be leaking carbon monoxide in your home unbeknownst to you," said Ms Robinson.

"Our message is simple – people should have their gas heaters serviced a minimum of every two years by a registered gasfitter. It could save the lives of you and your family."

The Foundation's website, www.chaseandtyler.org.au, has information about choosing the right gasfitter to service appliances. Specialist equipment and training is required to check for carbon monoxide leakage.

Victoria's Director of Energy Safety, Paul Fearon, commended Vanessa for her bravery and commitment to making a positive impact in light of her personal tragedy.

"Over the past decade in Victoria we've averaged one death every year from carbon monoxide poisoning. There have been countless more cases of illness – some that have been diagnosed and many more cases that have gone undetected, said Mr Fearon.

- **More**

“Despite the widespread use of gas heaters many people still aren’t aware of the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning - the Foundation will be vital in spreading the message and potentially saving lives.”

Origin will help spread this message by including a simple carbon monoxide household safety checklist in its Victorian gas customers’ winter bills from 1 May.

Origin’s head of Corporate Affairs Phil Craig explained: “The aims of the Chase and Tyler Foundation are a natural fit for Origin, and coming in to the cooler months, the timing couldn’t be better for gas customers to understand and manage the risk of CO poisoning in and around the home.”

- **Ends**

To arrange an interview please contact:

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High quality launch event images can be accessed after 12 noon on 2/5/13 via the following link:

www.photoeventz.com.au/chaseandtyler

BACKGROUND FACTS

The aims of the Chase and Tyler Foundation

- The Chase and Tyler Foundation has three aims:
 - To raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning
 - To tell people how to reduce their risk
 - To lobby the government to help improve gas appliance safety

Carbon monoxide poisoning

- Carbon monoxide exposure can lead to illness and in some cases, death
- Over the past decade Victoria has averaged one death per year from carbon monoxide poisoning and countless more cases of illness
- Carbon monoxide is a silent killer - it’s an invisible gas you can’t smell, see or taste
- Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are similar to those of the flu – often it can be misdiagnosed or untreated

Gas appliances and carbon monoxide

- Gas fuel burning appliances can spill carbon monoxide if they are faulty or have not been adequately maintained
- There is often no way of knowing that an appliance is spilling carbon monoxide
- Chase and Tyler died as a result of a faulty gas heater leaking carbon monoxide
- It's not just gas wall heaters that pose a risk – gas central heating units can also spill carbon monoxide

Reducing the risk

- Despite the wide use of gas heaters many people are unaware of the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning
- The best way to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning is to have gas heaters and fuel burning appliances serviced regularly
- Appliances should be serviced a minimum of every two years by a licensed gasfitter

Choosing a gasfitter

- Check the local paper or phone book for licensed gasfitters
- Before booking a service, ask the gasfitter if they are licensed
- Ask the gasfitter if they are qualified to check for carbon monoxide leakage
- Ask the gasfitter if they have a **carbon monoxide analyser**
- If the gasfitter doesn't have the right qualifications and equipment look for another tradesperson

Other lines of defence

- Regular servicing of gas fuel burning appliances and heaters is the best way to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning
- Audible carbon monoxide alarms are available in Australia but these have not been found to be totally reliable and they may give a false sense of security
- Experts recommend servicing appliances at least every two years as the best way to reduce risk

Chase and Tyler's deaths

- An inquest into Chase and Tyler's deaths was held in March
- The Coroner will hand down her findings in the next few months but it is known that a faulty gas wall heater caused Chase and Tyler's deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning
- In forming the Foundation, Vanessa wants to ensure Chase and Tyler's deaths have not been in vain by ensuring other families don't suffer a similar tragedy

Working with the government

- One of the Foundation's goals is to work with the government to help improve gas appliance safety
- The Foundation is working closely with Energy Safe Victoria, which is responsible for gas and electricity safety in that state
- The Foundation will continue to look at ways to work with government and policymakers to put better systems in place, particularly to help protect those who rent their homes