VICTORIA’S most traumatised children are often left in the care of unqualified and inadequately supported volunteers (The Age, 26/5). Much more than altruism is needed to work effectively with young people who suffer serious mental health, drug and alcohol and behavioural problems.

The state government hopes to introduce "professional in-home care" to improve the out-of-home care system. However, there is no professional association for youth workers, no regulation of the youth sector, and no common standards of practice among those who work with the most vulnerable. Just who are these "professionals" the government is talking about?

If the government is serious about securing adequate care, then strengthening the education and accreditation of those who work in the out-of-home care system needs to be a priority.

Michael Emslie, lecturer, youth work, RMIT University, Melbourne