



**Centre for Excellence
in Child and Family Welfare Inc.**

Media release

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Child protection inquiry visits Ballarat

Ballarat is set to host the second regional public sitting of the Baillieu Government's Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry (PVVCI) when the Inquiry Panel sits at Ballarat Bowls Club from 10.00am tomorrow, Wednesday 25 May.

Among the presenters to address the Panel, Child and Family Services (CAFS) Ballarat will focus on the day-to-day issues confronting community organisations providing much-needed family services, as well as out-of-home care programs for children and young people placed in State care.

"Over the last eight years, we've had strong legislative and system reforms to help vulnerable children, youth and families, but not the resources needed to make them work," said Kevin Zibell, chief executive of CAFS, today.

"There's a clear case for substantially increased funding for intake services such as ChildFirst and child protection, but also for the services that support an effective response, such as family services, foster care and residential care, including more intensive support through therapeutic approaches.

"Children are coming into the system earlier and they're staying longer, and that's creating a serious challenge to protecting their best interests and preventing harm that accumulates if we can't respond early enough or in a sustained manner with the help they need in the face of neglect and abuse," he said.

The Inquiry also needed to look at how local DHS child protection and related staff worked together as part of the broader response of government, community services, and the community at large to protect vulnerable children and young people.

Mr Zibell is also President of the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (the Centre), the State peak body for child and family services. The Centre has proposed a new Children, Young Persons and Families Strategy, together with stronger local participation in decision-making, including by children and young people themselves, as part of its formal written submission to the Inquiry.

"I encourage engagement with this Inquiry, so we're able to appreciate what people think about these important issues. Our children are our future, and no area of social reform is more important than this one," Mr Zibell concluded.

Announced by the Premier on 31 January, the Inquiry will: “investigate systemic problems in Victoria’s child protection system and make recommendations to strengthen and improve the protection and support of vulnerable young Victorians”, according to the official Inquiry website, www.chilprotectioninquiry.vic.gov.au

The Centre for Excellence has launched an Inquiry website for the community sector at www.theiroutcomesmatter.org. Related Twitter posts are hashtagged #pvvci.

The Inquiry will report to Parliament on 4 November.

Ballarat Bowls Club
Havelock Street, Ballarat
(City end next to Eastern Oval)

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