



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

## **Media release**

Wednesday 15 June 2011 – for immediate release

### **Independent scrutiny needed of siblings separated in care**

The peak body for child and family services in Victoria is calling for rigorous independent scrutiny of all decisions by the Department of Human Services to remove and separate siblings from existing placements in foster care.

“Recent media reports (‘Officials remove siblings from praised carer’, *The Age*, 15/6, ‘Siblings removal from carers comes under fire’, *The Age*, 17/5) suggest that removal and separation of siblings may sometimes occur for reasons other than the safety and wellbeing of children.

“If so, that risks inflicting on children in State care an unnecessary and traumatic disruption when placement together with their siblings is a vital source of stability and comfort in their lives,” said Dr Lynette Buoy, chief executive of the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, today.

“These children have already been removed from their parents into State care, and may well have formed a genuine and positive attachment with their foster carers. Unless there is a clear question of children’s safety and wellbeing, that attachment should not be jeopardised by difficulties in working relationships between carers and the Department,” Dr Buoy said.

She said that dispute resolution and independent review should be available, and that more attention was needed to supporting and resourcing case managers to work directly with families and develop a positive relationship with them.

“Any measures we can take to make placements as stable and positive as possible will undoubtedly promote the best interests of children, and that’s what needs to guide these decisions in all cases,” Dr Buoy said.

The reports give some urgency to calls to the Protecting Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Inquiry for an independent review process of Department decisions, and to a submission heard at the Morwell sitting regarding the impact of separation of siblings in State care.

**For interview:**

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