



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

Media release

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Inquiry to hear about protecting children in the north-west

The peak body for child and family services in Victoria is calling on the State Government to boost support for regional child and family services to intervene much earlier with vulnerable children and young people to prevent harm accumulating in their young lives.

The call comes as Mildura hosts the fifth regional public sitting of the Baillieu Government's Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry (PVVCI) this Thursday, 16 June.

"Many of our nearly 100 member organisations around Victoria have told us that child and family services are dealing with increasingly complex cases. It makes much better sense, in terms of economics, but especially in terms of outcomes for children, if we act earlier, before families are in crisis and children need to be removed," said Dr Lynette Buoy, chief executive of the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, today.

"Regional services face the additional problems of distance, the availability and sustainability of services, and the difficulty in recruiting and keeping staff as special challenges in their efforts to make a difference in children's lives. They also need to be free to make local decisions about services based on the particular circumstances of local need," Dr Buoy said.

The Inquiry will hear from organisations and individuals with current and past experience of the State care system, including child protection. Dr Buoy said that she hoped this would include young people who had left care and could offer valuable insights into their experience of the system.

Mallee Family Care, a member of the Centre, has made a written submission to the Inquiry arguing that more resourcing is needed for the preventative primary and secondary services that can prevent children and families needing the most serious level of intervention.

Executive Director, Vernon Knight, will make a verbal submission to the Inquiry on Thursday stressing the need for these services, which he said could "help kids avoid transferring their own vulnerability to a future generation". He will also highlight the importance of education in breaking down inherited disadvantage.

"We need to engage vulnerable children in education, acknowledging that the experience of their parents in school can act as a barrier to that vital and necessary engagement," Mr Knight said.

The Inquiry will convene at the Mildura Grand, Seventh Street, Mildura, from 9.00am on Thursday, 16 June. Verbal submissions will be heard by Chair and former Supreme Court of Victoria Judge, Philip Cummins, Professor Dorothy Scott, and Mr Bill Scales.

Announced by the Premier on 31 January, the Inquiry will report to Parliament in November. It 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.childprotectioninquiry.vic.gov.au

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

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