

Media release
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Strong families means the best start for kids

As tomorrow marks the start of National Families Week, the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare has chosen to reflect on the children and young people in Victoria who don't get the best start in life because of neglect and abuse.

Reflecting on the theme for this year's National Families Week - *The Best Start: Supporting Happy, Healthy Childhoods*, the Centre's chief executive Dr Lynette Buoy said there are more than 50,000 children annually who are subjected to family break down or whose parents are having difficulty looking after them.

It is these children who are the ones damaged by instability and anxiety, and who are not getting the best start.

Dr Buoy said the numbers of children experiencing upheaval could be reduced if family services were properly resourced to support families, and avoid them coming to the attention of child protection services.

"We have many examples where early and consistent support has kept families from heading down this road, like one where family services staff were able to intensively support and work alongside a single mum over a ten year period.

"They supported her to keep her five kids at home and keep them together in their best interests. This mum was socially isolated, and coping with a mental illness and a disability, she didn't want to let her kids go, but she was really struggling.

"These workers gained her trust, and coordinated a community care response which helped her keep her children with her. They have done well in school, and now the eldest are finishing school and going on to university.

"That's what strong families can do when they are given the right support."

National Families Week runs from 15 to 21 May with events across Australia.