



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

Media release

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Nine-year-old abandoned by system, not only workers

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare is calling on the Baillieu Government to fully acknowledge the wider systemic causes that led to a nine-year-old boy in State care being abandoned near nightfall at Coburg Lake.

“Investigations by police and the Department of Human Services will look at individual actions and decisions, but keeping the focus too narrow risks ignoring the relentless pressure demands and poor resourcing of the system that looks after at-risk children,” said Dr Lynette Buoy, chief executive officer of the Centre, today.

Dr Buoy said the number and complexity of cases and the lack of a “depth of responses” to children’s trauma were heightened by poor funding, a lack of capacity to recruit appropriately trained staff, and the necessity of community agencies having to rely on lowly paid casual staff to meet the unrealistic service targets of the Department.

“Contrary to the apparent perception in this case, we also need to acknowledge that not every worker who looks after children in State care is a government child protection worker. Children in residential care programs are often looked after by workers who are very poorly paid in comparison to their government colleagues. The Baillieu Government has recently retreated from its pre-election obligation to fully fund a long overdue increase for this predominantly female workforce,” Dr Buoy said.

Dr Buoy noted that Community Services Minister, Mary Wooldridge, had left resourcing out of her comments responding to this case, referring to training, expertise and knowledge, but not the dollars needed to achieve a sustainable workforce where quality services for children come first.

“This will remain a problem for any government that fails to acknowledge that outcomes for these deserving and vulnerable kids will only be lifted when leaders make a genuine investment, not just increase regulation and compliance,” Dr Buoy said.

She called on the government to ensure these matters were fully addressed in the Protecting Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Inquiry that will report on 4 November.

For media enquiries and interviews:

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