



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

## **Media release**

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### **Peak body calls for rethink on child protection roles**

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare has called for a substantial reconsideration of child protection roles in its first formal submission to the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry launched by Premier Baillieu in January and set to report to Parliament in November.

Launching [\*It's their outcomes that matter\*](#), Centre chief executive, Dr Lynette Buoy, said the current concentration of too many roles within the Department of Human Services was working against achieving the best outcomes for children and young people on a range of levels.

"At the moment we have child protection investigations, guardianship, funding, accreditation of community service organisations and decision-making all residing within one government department. That has to change if we are to untangle the system in the best interests of children," Dr Buoy said.

The Centre's submission to the Inquiry argues that investigations be retained by the Department, but that legal guardianship of children and young people rest with an Independent Office of the Children's and Young Persons' Guardian.

Community service organisations would also no longer be accredited by the Department, with an independent regulatory body like Consumer Affairs Victoria, which already oversees the legal and reporting obligations for incorporated associations, taking over that role. The submission also argues for much stronger local decision-making by community sector agencies.

"These changes would remove conflicts of interest within the current system, free community service organisations to advocate on behalf of the vulnerable without threat to their funding, increase accountability and transparency, and lead to an emphasis on actual outcomes, not just numbers put through the system," Dr Buoy said.

She said a Vulnerable Children, Young Persons and Families Strategy and Outcomes Accountability Frameworks proposed in the submission would underpin this wellbeing approach, and would be overseen by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

"While the community, the sector and government share responsibility for protecting vulnerable children and young people, the obligation of each to act must reflect their capacity to do so. This places the greatest responsibility on the State Government, which

by supporting our recommendations can more effectively support better outcomes for vulnerable children and young people – the only goal that really matters in this Inquiry,” Dr Buoy said.

The 60-page submission makes broad-ranging recommendations across the key areas of Identifying Vulnerability, a Promotion and Prevention Approach, a Governance and Legal Framework, Services for Vulnerable Children, Young People and Families, and Accountability and Transparency.

The Centre’s first submission will be complemented by three forthcoming position papers published between now and mid-August. These will further develop the Centre’s proposals for the Voice of the Child, Local Governance and Outcome Approaches, and Options for Out-of-Home Care.

The first regional public sittings of the Inquiry will take place in Geelong on Wednesday 18 May and Ballarat on 25 May, with further dates to be announced by the Inquiry for metropolitan and regional Victoria.

The Centre has launched an Inquiry website for the community sector at [www.theiroutcomesmatter.org](http://www.theiroutcomesmatter.org). The Protecting Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Inquiry website can be found at [www.childprotectioninquiry.vic.gov.au](http://www.childprotectioninquiry.vic.gov.au).

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