MEDIA RELEASE

CONNECTION TO CULTURE VITAL FOR INDIGENOUS CARE LEAVERS

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Cultural support and connectedness is a crucial factor in the successful transition of young Indigenous people leaving care, a new research report has found.

The *Indigenous Care Leavers in Victoria* report, from Monash University's Department of Social Work, offers important insight into how Indigenous care leavers can be better supported.

The report, launched at the Centre for Excellence today, found that Indigenous care leavers face the same challenges as other young people leaving care, including poorer educational and health outcomes and difficulty finding employment and housing.

The report, based on findings of a 14-month exploratory study of Indigenous care leavers, found that nurturing and strengthening connection to culture was crucial in supporting care leavers' resilience, identity and social connectedness.

The study also found that young Indigenous care leavers are often also called upon to act as caregivers for family members.

"These factors mean that we need to be developing and consistently implementing policies, practices and programs that address the specific needs of young Indigenous people leaving kinship, foster and residential care so they are set up for success," Centre for Excellence CEO Deb Tsorbaris said today.

"The report also finds that Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations play a key role in supporting young Indigenous people to make that often difficult transition from care to independent living and study or employment.

"The evidence clearly shows that well-resourced, well-established ACCOs, are able to deliver better outcomes for Aboriginal kids in care, including ensuring they are able to maintain a strong connection to community and culture.

"This is an important report that confirms what Aboriginal people and organisations have been telling us for a long time – Aboriginal families, communities and organisations need to have a key role in decision making for Aboriginal children and young people."

The full *Indigenous Care Leavers in Victoria* report can be downloaded here.

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