Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare Inc.

# Media release

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## Data on kids in care, stronger charter would lead to better outcomes

The Baillieu Government's publication of disturbing data on the most serious incidents in out-of-home care is a welcome step in the right direction and is a reason for strengthening Victoria's human rights charter, not weakening it, according to the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare.

"Transparent data and stronger measures to protect rights would together make a compelling case for action to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people," said Centre President, Mr Kevin Zibell, today.

He said the Centre had long argued for better and more transparent data on the State care system, but there needed to be engagement with community services on the most useful data to release. Releasing incident reports was only part of the answer, he said.

"Increased transparency requires that scrutiny of incident data challenge not just standards of service delivery but also inadequate levels of resourcing and support provided by government for children and young people in State care.

"Higher rates of out-of-home care and an unacceptable level of serious incidents in care only highlight the need to protect children and young people through a stronger charter of human rights," Mr Zibell said.

In a submission to the review of Victoria's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, the Centre has argued for improving the capacity of children and young people in State care to make complaints to the Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (VHREOC) regarding potential violation of their rights while in care. The review report released yesterday appears to weaken the Charter's human rights protections.

In an earlier submission to the Government's Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry, the Centre also argued for a transparent outcomes framework for vulnerable children and young people, as well as greater support for early intervention and prevention that could stem the flow of children and young people being taken into State care.

Gaps in available data about children and young people in care have also been highlighted as a barrier to more effective services at several of the Inquiry's public sittings.

"It's one thing to have expressions of rights, but quite another to enact them. There's really no alternative to effective policy and better resourcing within a strong framework of human rights. Clear data framed to protect individual privacy but to show how the system is tracking should then reflect a better picture than we are seeing now," Mr Zibell said.

**For interview:**
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