Centre for Excellence
in Child and Family Welfare Inc.

Media release

Thursday 18 August 2011 – for immediate release

Riots hold lessons for State's vulnerable children policy

Earlier steps to address vulnerability and social disadvantage may help to prevent future riots in the United Kingdom, but they are also the key to reducing the human, social and economic costs of vulnerable children, young people and families in Victoria.

This will be a key message tonight when Dr Lynette Buoy, chief executive of the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, gives the 15th annual William Carey Lecture on the theme of "Vulnerable children – their need, our challenge".

Dr Buoy will consider the role of social factors in the riots and implications for the State's policy regarding vulnerable children.

In particular, the inquiry into Victoria's human rights charter, the State Government's proposals for mandatory sentencing and the prospect of new private prisons risk creating the kind of excessive focus on law and order reflected in the public comments of UK prime minister David Cameron in response to the riots.

At the same time, hearings of the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry have suggested that involuntary participation may be considered for vulnerable families.

"Engagement is a much better approach than compulsion. If we are able to match a range of effective services to the diverse types of vulnerability that children, young people and families experience, they are much likelier to engage," Dr Buoy said today.

Dr Buoy will outline how this could be implemented through a new vulnerable children, young persons and families strategy to provide a stronger focus on outcomes. The strategy and outcomes frameworks are a key focus of the Centre's submissions to the child protection inquiry.

"We are not helping children just by removing them from abusive and neglectful families – the question is what we are doing to prevent that, and to ensure that children receive quality care if removal needs to take place. At the moment, there is a significant imbalance in funding of different parts of the system," Dr Buoy said today.

The speech acknowledges the growing unmet demand for social services identified by the ACOSS community sector survey of 745 organisations launched earlier this week.

It will also send a clear message about the need for greater accountability for problems in the system that result from poor resourcing, policy, or decisions regarding the best interests of children.

The William Carey Lecture, which is free and open to the public, will be held at 7.30pm tonight, Thursday 18 August, in the Ian Woolf Auditorium, Performing Arts Building, Carey Baptist Grammar, 349 Barkers Road, Kew.

For interview:
Dr Lynette Buoy
Chief Executive Officer
Mobile: 0407 702 975
Ph: 03 9094 3518

Media inquiries:
Darren Lewin-Hill
Media & Communications Coordinator
Mobile: 0408 083 238
darren.lewin-hill@cfecfw.asn.au

Web:
cfecfw.asn.au
theiroutcomesmatter.org

Venue inquiries:
David Crawshaw
Carey Baptist Grammar
Mobile: 0417 201 730