MEDIA RELEASE

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Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare Inc.

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State apology to victims of forced adoptions

This morning the Victorian Parliament delivered its official apology to victims of forced adoptions.

According to the Commonwealth Senate Committee Inquiry tabled during February 2012, this practice saw as many as 250,000 babies forcibly taken from their mothers at birth.

The practice of forced adoptions was widespread from the 1950s to 1970s, with the vast majority of babies taken from young, unmarried mothers.

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare and its members welcome the Victorian Parliament's apology to victims of forced adoptions.

The Centre's Director of Social Policy, Marilyn Webster, said "it is vital that we take this opportunity to recognise the hurt experienced by each party these flawed policies and practices impacted, and acknowledge the resultant disruption to family ties".

"We should also stop to recognise that the forced separation of children from their families represents a failure of the community to support those that need assistance when most vulnerable, and vow to never repeat these failures... we must promote a culture of family preservation and recognition of entitlement to information".

She stated that "we understand that nothing can undo the damage caused by our past policies and practices, but this Parliamentary apology is a vital and long-awaited step in the reconcilliation process".

The Centre welcomes the government commitments to increase funding for counselling services supporting those impacted by adoptions, remove fees associated with searching for family members separated by adoption, amend the Adoption Act to reveal information about the child to birth parents (as per other states), and introduce integrated birth certificates.

These practical measures will help right past wrongs, while assuring future generations do not suffer the same torment as the victims of forced adoptions.

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