

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday May 24, 2007

NEED FOR A SHARED APPROACH TO PROTECTING CHILDREN

Services working with vulnerable adults have a special role to play in protecting children according to the Chair of the Victorian Child Death Review Committee (VCDRC), Lisa Ward.

“It is vital that mental health, disability and drug and alcohol services work actively with children’s and family services, including Child Protection, to promote the interests of children.

“Victoria’s new legislative framework establishes a whole of community responsibility for protecting children. This approach is vital,” Ms Ward said.

“We are still some way from the ideal scenario in which the protection of children is genuinely seen as a shared community responsibility.

Ms Ward’s comments followed the tabling in State Parliament today of the VCDRC 2007 Annual Report on the deaths of children involved with the state’s Child Protection Service.

“The death of a child has a devastating impact on all those involved. On behalf of the VCDRC, I extend my sympathy to the families and friends of these children and to the professionals who provided support and assistance,” Ms Ward said.

A total of 18 children known to Child Protection died in 2006.

Ms Ward said that half of these deaths were due to illness and congenital conditions, often linked to premature birth.

“Nine children died from acquired or congenital illness, four from accidents, four from reasons unknown or yet to be determined by the coroner and one from SIDS.

“In 2006 more than half the child deaths involved infants younger than six months of age, highlighting the vulnerability of this group of children.

“Because of their complex needs, most families involved in child death reviews had contact with several service systems at any given time. This means that strong partnerships between services are essential.

The deaths of all children who are current or recent clients of Child Protection are reviewed by the VCDRC to identify any common themes and emerging trends.

Recommendations for action are made to the Minister for Community Services to ensure that key findings influence future policy and practice.

Media Contact: Loula Dounias, Executive Officer, VCDRC, 8601 5294