

CHILD DEATH REPORT RELEASED

Thursday 4th May 2006

The 2006 report of Victorian Child Death Review Committee (VCDRC), the *Annual Report of Inquiries into the Deaths of Children Known to Child Protection 2006*, has been tabled in the State Parliament today.

The Victorian Child Death Review Committee is an independent body that reviews the deaths of all Victorian children known to the Child Protection system.

A total of 11 children known to Child Protection died in 2005.

Chair of the Committee, Lisa Ward, said that the largest category of deaths were due to illness and disease.

“In 2005 five children died from acquired illness, two from reasons unknown or yet to be determined, two from suicide or self harm, one from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and one from an accident.

“On behalf of the VCDRC I’d like to extend my sympathy to the families and friends of all the children whose deaths we considered and to the many professionals who provided support and assistance.

“We’re aware of the terrible impact the death of a child has on staff in Child Protection and related services. Despite this, child protection workers have repeatedly shown a willingness to review their practice and identify new and better ways of working.

“The ability of individuals and agencies to think critically about how they work is a credit to them.

“Most of the children who died came from families with multiple and complex needs.

“We welcome recent Victorian government reforms aimed at improving services to very vulnerable families and recognise the implementation challenge that lies ahead,” Ms Ward said.

The VCDRC also received a special study it commissioned, examining SIDS risk factors and prevention in the child protection population.

The study makes it clear that risk factors for SIDS and for child abuse and neglect are common, meaning children known to the Child Protection system are likely to be significantly represented among the group of children who die from SIDS.

“The wider community is now aware of safe sleeping practices for young children, but some high-risk families are harder to reach,” Ms Ward said.

“It’s vital that safe sleeping messages are delivered by the health professionals who work with these families, especially midwives, maternal and child health nurses and general practitioners.”

“Drug and alcohol and mental health services have a special role to play in promoting SIDS prevention with parents.

“We welcome every effort to promote a child centred focus within these services.”