



# MEDIA RELEASE

25/07/2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Child Abuse Still on the Rise as Foster Care Exodus Continues**

### **Berry Street response to Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) Child Protection Report (2012/2013)**

“As reports to Child Protection continue to escalate, a huge decline in foster carers in Victoria is adding further pressure on Victoria’s already under resourced Out-of-Home Care System,” says Julian Pocock, Berry Street Director of Public Policy.

“The AIHW report released overnight reveals that in the last year over 616 foster carer households exited our system while only 442 could be recruited - once again Victoria is the only state with a decline in foster care,” he added. “Victoria now has less than half the number of carers as NSW and this is the third year in a row that more carers have left Victoria’s system than been recruited.”

Pocock added, “Whilst foster care is under pressure right across Australia, Victoria lags behind all other States and Territories. Victoria provides the lowest levels of financial assistance to carers and is paying the cost for that by having fewer placement options available for vulnerable children.”

He said, “The flow on effects of escalating numbers of child protection cases were catastrophic for some children. Recent media reports have highlighted the sexual abuse of vulnerable young children inappropriately placed in residential care. Ideally these young children should be placed with well supported foster or kinship families, not alongside highly traumatised young people who are still recovering from their own childhood trauma and may pose a risk to other children.”

“Berry Street”, he said, “is also concerned to see no change in the over representation of Aboriginal children in State care and called for significant new investment in prevention and early intervention delivered through local Aboriginal services.”

“By the time the AIHW release next year’s Child Protection annual report, the State election will have come and gone. If that report is to break recent trends we need the next State Government, Labor or Coalition, to significantly increase assistance to these



children and implement measures that strengthen the rights of children in care. Clearly current government reforms are falling well short of what's required.”

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**Media contact: Dylan Quinnell**  
**on 0413 365 834 or [dquinnell@berrystreet.org.au](mailto:dquinnell@berrystreet.org.au)**

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