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For Immediate Release

MEDIA RELEASE

CALLS TO ABANDON MINIMUM SENTENCING FOR YOUTH

CatholicCare CEO Fr Joe Caddy today challenged the State Government to take a whole of Government approach to protecting Victoria's children. Commenting at the Broadmeadows sitting of the State Government Inquiry into Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children, Fr Caddy observed that, "On the one hand the Government is conducting a very worthy inquiry into protecting vulnerable children while on the other, it is attempting to impose minimum sentencing requirements and remove judicial discretion in the sentencing of some of the most vulnerable children in the state".

A Department of Human Services snapshot survey taken in 2009 showed that of the 155 boys and 9 girls in custody in the Youth Justice System, 30 per cent had current or previous involvement with Child Protection. Given this high representation, it is fair to conclude that matters relating to Youth Justice are highly relevant to an inquiry into protecting Victoria's vulnerable children.

In its submission to the State Government Inquiry, CatholicCare called on the State Government to abandon its intention to remove discretion from judges in sentencing young people convicted of certain offences. Chief Executive Officer Fr Joe Caddy explained to the Inquiry that the complexity of needs that are typically part of the story for children who find themselves in custody in the Youth Justice System means that judges need to exercise a wide degree of discretion in sentencing. "The principal purpose of sentencing children, including those who find themselves in the Youth Justice System, has to be the children's rehabilitation and optimal development. To impose a requirement for minimum sentences, under certain circumstances, would disallow judges to take into account the very important considerations currently required by the Act. It would considerably reduce the capacity of the court to sentence in the best interests of the child and his or her prospects for rehabilitation".

Interview Opportunities:

- CatholicCare CEO Fr Joe Caddy Ph 0407 261 863

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