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MEDIA RELEASE

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Launching *Our Children, Our Schools (OCOS)*— an alliance of Victorian community education campaigns

A group representing tens of thousands of parents and children has today launched an alliance, 'Our Children, Our Schools', to secure better provision and funding of public education in Victoria.

OCOS is calling for every Victorian child to have access to a high-quality Foundation-to-Year 12 public education in their local community.

Victorian parents are frustrated at the state of public education in their local communities, and are realising they are not alone. The availability of local secondary schools is of particular concern. Community campaigns, run by ordinary families in their spare time, have been springing up all over Melbourne in recent years. These parents hail from all points of Victoria's compass, stretching from the inner suburbs to Coburg in the north and Beaumaris in the south, from Yarraville in the west to Oakleigh in the east and further afield to places like Doreen, Mernda and Kyneton.

OCOS spokesperson, Clarke Martin, says 'We had each been working in our local communities, with other parents wanting to improve access to our local public schools for all local children. In some areas of Melbourne our kids are not zoned for any public school or the zones change from year to year. In these areas, the schools we have got are bursting at the seams, not reflective of our communities or only take enrolments for all boys or all girls. We can all see that the Government does a really brilliant job with some public schools in particular areas—those schools are hugely popular with kids and their parents. We want to see that brilliance available to everybody's kids in their own neighbourhoods, right across Melbourne and country Victoria.'

Sixty-three percent of Victorian children attend public schools in Victoria and 68.7 percent of our schools are public schools*. Even so, families are under increasing pressure to fund a private education for their children, especially secondary-school-aged children in communities where there is little choice offered by the State. But very few families can afford a private education and for some who stretch themselves, the stress on the family becomes unbearable.

'In most areas our children can attend a very good local primary school and that gives us confidence that it can be done. Why can't the government achieve the same consistency with secondary schools?' said Mr Martin.

In this election year, OCOS is asking all parties and candidates to raise the bar on public education.

Mr Martin says, 'We've got a growing movement of parents, people who wouldn't normally get involved in politics but just can't live without this basic public infrastructure so it's getting us activated. Parents will change their vote on this issue if we see one of the parties putting forward decent policies for everybody's local schools.'

Questions can be directed to:

1. Clarke Martin – 0412 259 631
2. Catherine Hall – 0400 831 552

*http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Report_on_Schooling_2011_Additional_Statistics.pdf



Our Children, Our Schools— an alliance of Victorian community education campaigns:

Beaumaris School Community Group (BSCG)

A new school for Bannockburn District

High School for Coburg (HSC)

Doreen and Mernda Secondary School Alliance

Friends of Kyneton Education (FoKE)

Oakleigh Ward Local Secondary School (OWLSS)

Richmond High School Choices

Secondary Education for Seddon, Kingsville and Yarraville (SKY High)

TwoSchoolsNow (Port Phillip and Southbank)

Every child in Victoria should have access to high quality state primary and secondary education in their local community...