

MEDIA RELEASE

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New disability support service aims to keep families together

UnitingCare Burnside is launching a new service which will give families of children and young people with a disability individual support, care and assistance to help care for their children at home rather than having to place them in long term out-of-home care.

The Extended Family Support Service (EFS) has been generously funded by the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and will assist up to 31 families in Sydney's southern and western suburbs.

The service is designed to be flexible so families can identify where they need support and access it at critical times and for longer periods if needed.

UnitingCare Burnside Chief Executive Officer Jane Woodruff said, 'These families are really in the most extreme circumstances. They are at the point of deciding whether to put their child into out-of-home care as they no longer can adequately care for them at home. The pressure of looking after these children and young people and dealing with their needs and sometimes challenging behaviour can lead to family breakdown. Our evidence shows that if we can assist these families with individually tailored support and respite care then there's a good chance that the family can stay together and that's proved to be a benefit for the children and the rest of the family.'

Part of the service will also address the needs of other family members, particularly siblings who frequently require additional support because much of the family's attention and time is being spent on their brother or sister with a disability.

A parent of one of the young people with a disability said, 'Before EFS we felt trapped as a family. The nursing care my daughter gets at respite means I know she's safe and we all get a break. Also the visits by the caseworker helped build my confidence as an advocate for my child and gave me some new ideas to manage her difficult behaviour.'

The EFS will be launched by the Hon. Phillip Costa MP, Minister for Water, Minister for Corrective Services and Minister representing the Minister for Community Services, the Hon. Linda Burney MP at Le Montage, 38 Frazer Street, Lilyfield on Wednesday 10 February 2010 at 11:00am.

To organise interviews and photo/filming opportunities contact:

Mark Warren, UnitingCare Burnside on 02 9407 3217 or 0438 294 938
mwarren@burnside.org.au