

Children's well-being a great investment – Wood Royal Commission releases recommendations

Background

Justice Wood was commissioned to conduct an Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW. His submission to the NSW Government was fully endorsed by UnitingCare NSW.ACT and championed by UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families through UnitingCare Burnside who established a campaign to raise awareness and support for the recommendations.

Key Recommendations

- Establishing a state wide network of Child Wellbeing units in Health, Education, Housing, Police, Juvenile Justice and Disabilities to enable a quicker response time for children identified as being at risk by teachers, police, doctors and other mandatory reporters.
- Extending background checks to new groups including volunteers in high risk roles with children and family day care providers.
- Increased funding for the expansion of an early intervention program.
- Establishing Region Intake and Referral services.
- Creating new referral pathways.

On 23 February 2009, the NSW Government responded to Justice Wood's recommendations.

Response from NSW Government

- 106 out of 111 of the recommendations are being supported
- A Stage One investment of \$230million will be used to begin the reform process.

Response from UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families

- The new approach has been welcomed by UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families through UnitingCare Burnside.
- UnitingCare Burnside CEO, Jane Woodruff said it was "great to see strong support" and that "improving the life opportunities of our state's most vulnerable children, young people and families is a wise investment".
- UnitingCare Burnside has expressed a desire to see a strong network of support services made available as soon as possible to prevent vulnerable children falling through the gaps.
- Appreciation was expressed at the government's acknowledgement of the contributions that non-government organisations like UnitingCare Burnside make in helping the government care for children across a range of services including out of home care.