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Keep Them Safe: Children's health a top priority

NSW Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, today joined the Premier in praising the efforts of health professionals working to improve the health and safety of children in NSW, and committed the health system to ongoing support for the Government's implementation of recommendations from the *Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW*.

"Child protection is core business for NSW Health and the Wood Inquiry Report is an opportunity for NSW Health to further strengthen its efforts in this area," Mr Della Bosca said.

"The NSW health system offers a wide range of services to children and families aimed at the prevention of child abuse and neglect, early intervention when risk factors are identified, and specialist support to counter the effects of abuse when it has occurred.

"NSW Health strives to work in partnership with children, families and other government agencies to improve children's wellbeing and fully supports a closely integrated whole-of-government and community approach as the Commission has recommended.

"The Rees Government accepts the Commission's findings about the need to enhance the system of support for vulnerable children and their families before their problems escalate and children end up in the statutory system.

"Specifically, NSW Health will work with the non-government sector in implementing the Commission's recommendations for Regional Intake and Referral Services.

"NSW Health will also work with other Government agencies to establish Child Wellbeing Units to serve Area Health Services and the Children's Hospital at Westmead.

"The Rees Government will look at enhancing the targeted support which the health system provides for vulnerable children and their families by examining the introduction of sustained health home visiting.

"This involves specialist child and family health nurses working intensively with high-need families during pregnancy and in the first two years of a child's life," he said.

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“Sustained health home visiting has already been successfully trialled in Miller, a suburb of Sydney. In the remainder of 2008/09, NSW Health will commence further trials of sustained health home visiting with a view to increased coverage in 2009/2010,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“The Rees Government acknowledges the poor health of some children and young people entering out-of-home care and will give priority to reforming the provision of health care to this disadvantaged group.

“Out of home care co-ordinators to be appointed in each Area Health Service will drive reform in this area.

“There will be new processes for providing comprehensive health assessments of children and young people entering care and better co-ordination of health services for them.

“NSW Health will also undertake a prevalence study to consider the health status of children already in care, what services they are receiving and what further health care they require,” Mr Della Bosca said.

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