



Social Workers part of solution to child protection

Responding to the Victorian Ombudsman's report and the revelations of a 30-year incest case, the AASW today called for a greater investment in the training and development of high quality staff, as well as a focus on prevention of child abuse and early intervention.

Child protection notifications have doubled in the last 10 years to 300,000 per year. Further, the number of children placed under protective orders and removed from their homes has also risen. Nationally, the systems are groaning under the weight of massive caseloads.

The cases of children not receiving the support they need highlights the need for high quality staff who have had direct face-to-face work with vulnerable children and their families and professional supervision as part of their training.

No other professional discipline is so immersed in the areas of knowledge and professional practice that are essential for quality relationship based child protection practice, and in assisting the recovery of survivors of child abuse. As a result, Social Workers are recognised throughout the world as the core professional group in child protection policy, management and practice.

AASW National President Professor Bob Lonne said "It's reassuring that the Victorian Minister responsible, and the Victorian Children's Commissioner, support a greater investment in high quality frontline staff. The State Government also needs to focus greater resources on the prevention programs, such as early childhood care, and health visitors assigned to new parents, which have proved effective here and overseas."

"The next step has to be a workforce strategy for the whole of Government and the community sector to enable services to address the needs of children and their families," he continued.

In particular, the AASW calls for:

- A Government and Community Sector workforce strategy which includes accreditation of staff. This will ensure high quality and committed staff work with vulnerable children and their families in the public and community sector;
- An increased investment in those professionals working with children and their families, including measures to increase the training and recruitment of high quality staff into child protection services and industry plans to retain experienced professionals in the sector;
- A commitment to community strengthening by increased investments in services that work with families and children and their families;
- Specific programs to address the multiple needs of Indigenous children and families who continue to be over-represented in child neglect and abuse referrals and investigations.

The whole community is responsible for the well-being of children, for those families in need of extra support. "Child protection is a responsibility we all share. Social workers within the child protection system, in hospitals, in juvenile justice, in education and in the community sector have vital roles to play to protect children and support families in need," said Professor Bob Lonne.