



Wood Response: Laying the Foundations

The NSW Government's response to the Wood Inquiry into child protection services is a large step in the right direction. The Government has made a firm commitment to support families before they reach the critical point of DoCS intervention and possible child removal, and to enabling the community sector to provide additional services to vulnerable children and their families.

The AASW welcomes the NSW Government's commitment to early intervention, and supports efforts to better resource the community sector. Together with measures to strengthen families with the support of the community sector, the plans announced today should result in fewer children reaching the crisis end of the system.

"The Premier has made a strong commitment to early intervention and prevention, which we warmly welcome. The strategy will build capacity in child protection services, enhance early intervention and reduce the number of children needing intervention from DoCS," said Kandie Allen-Kelly, AASW CEO.

The AASW welcomes initiatives aimed at attracting more Indigenous case workers and thorough consultation with Indigenous communities. Combined with targeted programs, this will help Indigenous children, their families and communities get better support to address their over-representation in the child protection system.

"We're pleased that the Government will enable community-based organisations to provide additional services to vulnerable children and their families. The partnership with the community sector is a welcome move." said Professor Bob Lonne, AASW National President. "The next step will be a workforce strategy for the whole of Government and community sector to enable services to address the needs of children and their families."

The strategy must include:

- Worker accreditation to ensure high quality and committed staff work with vulnerable children and their families in the public and community sector;
- A review of funding arrangements with the community sector (as is scheduled for services in the ACT) to increase the length of funding contracts, increase wages and enhance conditions such as training; and
- Incentives for students and new graduates to undertake training and gain employment in the child protection workforce, both DoCS, other Government agencies and community-based services.

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 must all share. Social workers within the child protection system, in hospitals, in juvenile justice, in education and in the community sector have a vital role to play," said Professor Bob Lonne.