



## Australian Association of Social Workers

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# Social Workers welcome Wood Inquiry but look for workforce strategy

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) today warmly welcomed the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW by Justice Wood.

The AASW welcomes the move to identify the most at-risk children which should enable the Department to better prioritise their needs, and should enable the community sector to provide increased family and child support for those children not identified as at significant risk of harm or abuse.

Community services have experience of implementing innovative high quality services. The move towards establishing new Indigenous child and family centres and Aboriginal specialist child protection advice programs is critical to ensuring that culturally appropriate and locally based services are delivered to Indigenous children, families and communities.

The recommendations reveal the critical need to develop a comprehensive workforce development plan and a resourcing strategy to enable the community sector to provide support to at-risk children, families and communities. Both the Federal and NSW Governments have a responsibility to ensure:

- Minimum qualification standards for all workers in community services providing support for children at risk and their families, so that the community can have confidence that staff are appropriately trained;
- A national or state register of workers in these organisations to ensure workers perform their duties professionally and avoid harm to these vulnerable children and families;
- A clear set of maximum ratio of staff to clients (families and their children) so that adequate resources are able to be delivered to clients.

**Professor Bob Lonne, National President of the AASW**, said, “The Wood Inquiry recommendations will take NSW a long way forward, but we need a professional and accountable workforce to deliver the best possible services to our most vulnerable children and their families.”

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