



Social Workers at the heart of child protection

Marking National Child Protection Week, the AASW (Australian Association of Social Workers) today called for a renewed commitment to assist families to better look after their children, as well as increased investment in the programs that intervene when children are abused or neglected.

Child protection notifications have doubled in the last 10 years to 300,000 per year. Nationally, the systems are groaning under the weight of massive caseloads.

The attention that has been focused on child protection and child safety is an opportunity for Governments to focus on the measures that have been proven to assist children and their families.

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

AASW President Professor Bob Lonne said “Social Workers work every day to support and protect children. Social Workers have to make difficult decisions about keeping families together or removing children for their safety and protection. That’s why Social Workers call for an investment in the measures that will better enable them to do their professional duty.” Professor Lonne has recently co-authored *Reforming Child Protection*.

In particular, the AASW calls for:

- An increased investment in those professionals working directly with children and their families, including measures to increase the training and recruitment of high quality Social Workers into child protection services and industry plans to retain experienced professionals in the sector;
- A dedicated source of funding for research on best practice in child protection;
- A commitment to community strengthening by increased investments in services that work with families and children to enable them to recognise and act on “teachable moments”; those moments when a child or family is able to take on board advice to stop and prevent adverse behaviour;
- A public education program that helps to shape the community’s attitudes along the lines of other successful social marketing campaigns;
- 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.