



Out-of-home care transfer to NGOs: Good for children

13 March 2012

Alison Peters, NCOSS Director, has welcomed the Government's announcement that Justice Wood's recommendation to transfer out-of-home care (OOHC) to the non-government sector will be phased in over ten years. She pointed out that:

"NGOs have provided out-of-home care in NSW for decades. The Government's plan, developed in collaboration with the NGO sector, is a planned increase of the capacity of NGOs to provide a greater share of OOHC. NGOs also provide early intervention and prevention services, support and other community services. Our role in the child protection system is in partnership with Government. The core child protection functions of Community Services will remain within the public sector under the policy of the NSW Government."

In 2008, Justice Wood recommended that out-of-home care services be transferred to the non-government sector as part of a comprehensive review of Child Protection Services in NSW. His report highlighted that both government and non-government organisations have a role to play in ensuring the best interests of children and young people are achieved. The Wood Report proposed that the non-government sector have specific responsibility for OOHC to allow Government to concentrate on its core role of investigating and taking appropriate action when children and young people are at risk of significant harm. Justice Wood carefully weighed the evidence in coming to this conclusion.

Opponents of the OOHC transfer have made claims that the non-government sector is less accountable and less regulated than the government sector in out-of-home care. Indeed the reverse is true. For example, the vast majority of established non-government OOHC providers are fully accredited by the Children's Guardian, a standard not yet reached by Community Services OOHC services. Further claims that the cost of OOHC is much greater in the NGO sector and that outcomes are not as good are not borne out by the facts.

NCOSS is committed to working on improving the outcomes for vulnerable children and young people. Unfortunately, at this point in time, way too many are "in the system" and this means that there is much work to be done, whether by experienced and committed workers in Government or their equally experienced and committed counterparts in the non-government sector. We would urge that child protection be a matter of collaboration and ongoing discussion to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and young people in this state.

Media Contact: Alison Peters, Director 0425 231 814 (mob) (02) 9211 2599 (wk)