



# Budget 2009-10

# Investing in Jobs

## COMMUNITY SERVICES

### **\$750 million investment to keep NSW children and young people safe in response to Wood Inquiry**

The NSW Government will invest \$750 million to support families and protect children in response to the 2008 Wood Inquiry into Child Protection.

This investment over five years is to implement *Keep Them Safe*, the whole-of-Government action plan developed in response to the 2008 Wood Inquiry into Child Protection.

This is an additional \$520 million on top of initial *Keep Them Safe* funding package announced by the Government in March.

"The NSW Government is investing more to support families and provide greater protection for vulnerable children," Ms Burney said.

*Keep Them Safe: A shared approach to child wellbeing* aims to re-shape the way family and community services are delivered in NSW so that children, young people and families receive support and services before problems escalate into crises.

Ground-breaking legislation was passed by the NSW Parliament in April to give effect to the changes.

"The intention is to enable the Department of Community Services to concentrate on the most serious cases by linking families to support provided by other government and non-government agencies, in line with Justice Wood's recommendations," she said.

"A large proportion of the new money will go to non-government organisations to provide out-of-home care for children who have been separated from their families, another of the Wood Special Commission's recommendations."

Funding will also be allocated to support the non-government sector's important role in working with Aboriginal children and families.

The funding will be allocated across several Government agencies reflecting Commissioner's Wood's view that child protection is a responsibility that must be shared across Government and the community.

"I am pleased to say that more than 40 percent will go to non-government organisations, to support their valuable role in working with children and families," Ms Burney said.

Services to be delivered by the non government sector include:

- \$132 million over four years to provide more places for children in out-of-home care;
- \$23.5 million over four years to establish a network of referral services to link children and families needing support with services in the local area;
- \$12 million over four years for intensive help for Aboriginal families where children are at risk of serious harm;



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- \$6 million over four years to trial a new model for keeping children in Aboriginal families safe, that involves child protection workers working with Aboriginal family and community members.

Ms Burney said prevention and early intervention is a critical part of the package.

“It is clear that outcomes for children are better and services are more effective if families are supported earlier and problems are addressed before they escalate,” she said.

The Government will provide increased funding for prevention and early intervention services which research has shown to be effective, including:

- \$27 million over four years for expansion of the Brighter Futures early intervention program which provides vulnerable families with a range of support services including quality child care, parenting programs, case management and home visiting;
- \$14 million over four years for services to support children who have parents with a mental illness;
- \$8 million over four years for specialist nurses to provide support at home for vulnerable mothers who are pregnant or have babies or very young children;
- \$8 million over four years for children and young people who are at risk because of their parents’ drug or alcohol abuse;
- \$4 million over four years for integrated case management with families who are in contact with multiple agencies in the child protection system to provide a coordinated service that addresses families’ needs and prevents future harm;
- \$28 million over four years for a range of other evidence based prevention and early intervention services, such as family support services and sustained health home visiting.

Other areas to be funded include:

- Establishing Child Wellbeing Units in government agencies – to unblock the Department of Community Services Helpline by advising frontline staff such as healthcare workers and teachers how to help children and families who need support but not statutory intervention;
- Improving interagency cooperation at regional and local levels through better exchange of information and improved coordination of services to children and families;
- Increasing the use of alternative dispute resolution in the Children’s Court, making the process less adversarial and user friendly for children, young people and their families;
- Increasing investment in services to provide help to children and families who need statutory intervention to prevent future harm.