

Keep Them Safe

A shared approach to child wellbeing

Media Release

Minister for Community Services
The Hon. Linda Burney MP

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***Keep Them Safe* – spreading the message around the state**

Three hundred senior executives from justice and human services agencies in Sydney will attend the first forum where they will gain firsthand insight into NSW's eagerly anticipated *Keep Them Safe* reforms.

Linda Burney, the lead Minister for *Keep Them Safe*, said Sydney is the first stop of a six-week regional engagement tour.

Keep Them Safe is the NSW Government's action plan to drastically change the way children and families are protected and supported

"The response to the Sydney forum has been overwhelming and is a clear indication of the level of interest in the reforms," Ms Burney said.

"Forums will also be held in Newcastle, Coffs Harbour, Wollongong, Queanbeyan, Armidale, Dubbo, Broken Hill and Wagga Wagga to promote discussion and generate awareness around *Keep Them Safe*. At this point nearly 800 people have registered to attend.

"This initiative highlights a new unified approach towards child and family wellbeing, as advocated by the Honourable James Wood AO QC in his *Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection in NSW*."

The three-hour forums will be facilitated by Julie McCrossin and will feature a hypothetical case study, panel discussions and interactive discussions. Senior representatives from government and non-government agencies will also be on hand to answer questions about the reforms, on issues such as the new mandatory reporting threshold, Child Wellbeing Units and Regional Intake and Referral Services. Further details on upcoming training initiatives to occur between October to December 2009 for mandatory reporters will also be announced.

The tour is an initiative of the NSW Government in partnership with the non-government sector and is being coordinated by the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA).

"This state has embarked on significant reforms in child protection that require the backing of senior management in all the Government agencies and NGOs that work with children and young people," Ms Burney said.

"We will soon be running training programs for over 200,000 mandatory reporters across the state, so that they understand the new system. The engagement tour is the opportunity for school principals, regional department heads and local leaders in the non-Government sector to find out what will be involved and to give it their full support."

ACWA CEO Andrew McCallum said the path to truly successful reform rests upon a strong spirit of collaboration between the state's government and non-government sectors.



“Only by working together can we create a better future for our community’s most vulnerable,” Mr McCallum said.

“It is a message we will be promoting loud and clear as we move around the state over the next six weeks.”

Bill Pritchard, Executive Officer of the NSW Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care Secretariat (AbSec), has welcomed the opportunity for Aboriginal agencies to participate in the *Keep Them Safe* dialogue and embrace the new shared approach to child wellbeing.

“*Keep Them Safe* contains a number of significant recommendations relating to better outcomes for Aboriginal child and families and I encourage Aboriginal organisations to seize this opportunity to contribute to this most vital of discussions,” he said.

NCOSS Acting Director Samantha Edmonds said the tour is the first step in what needs to be a comprehensive suite of measures to ensure everyone involved in child wellbeing understands the implications of *Keep Them Safe* and what their roles will be under the new system.

“We need to keep in mind that Commissioner Wood said child wellbeing is everyone’s responsibility, and it is essential that there is strong communication between all parts of the sector, both government and non-government, so we can ensure that all children are happy, healthy and well cared for,” she said.

The next forum will be held in Newcastle, on September 11. For more details visit: www.acwa.asn.au and www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au.

Media Contacts

Anh Dang	Minister Burney’s Office	9228 4455 / 0427 783 208
Andrew McCallum	CEO, ACWA	0409 221 414
Bill Pritchard	Executive Officer, AbSec	0408 888 698

Upcoming *Keep Them Safe* Regional Engagement Tour Forums

September 11	Newcastle
September 18	Coffs Harbour
September 25	Wollongong
September 28	Queanbeyan
September 30	Campbelltown
October 2	Armidale
October 6	Penrith
October 12	Dubbo
October 13	Broken Hill
October 16	Wagga Wagga

