

## MEDIA RELEASE

**Minister for Community Services**  
**Minister for Women**  
**The Hon. Linda Burney MP**



---

**22 September 2009**

### **REAL IDEAS NEEDED ON CHILD PROTECTION, BURNEY URGES OPPOSITION**

Minister for Community Services Linda Burney is unimpressed by the Opposition's attempt at a social policy framework on human services.

"After 14 years in Opposition they still haven't come up with an alternative plan for child protection.

"The Opposition's *Social Policy Framework* ([www.sshs.com.au](http://www.sshs.com.au)) – released on 21 September – is an empty shell. Finding any substance in this policy statement is like trying to grasp a cloud.

"They are bereft of ideas.

"The first and only solution they've put forward in response to the complex problem of child abuse and neglect are mandatory Parental Responsibility Contracts.

"Parental Responsibility Contracts have been used by caseworkers in NSW since 2006 and are undergoing changes as part of *Keep Them Safe*.

"The Opposition's proposal to make these contracts mandatory is flawed. When a child is at serious risk of harm Community Services takes court action to have the child removed. This is the "mandatory" aspect of the child protection system.

"Until that point of removal, caseworkers use a range of strategies to improve family functioning so that children are safe. All these strategies rely on the voluntary participation of parents.

"The Opposition's flawed policy shows they have no understanding of this critically important portfolio.

"Pru Goward has been in the job for nine months yet she still has nothing to say about her portfolio. Her homepage still says the Community Services portfolio is 'under construction'."

"At the recent Estimates hearing the Opposition was outdone by the Greens in the quality of questions, and in an astounding act of laziness, they failed to provide any written questions."

Meanwhile the Opposition's Social Policy Framework contains only two commitments in children's services – to provide for universal participation in early childhood education and to move the government officials responsible for this area from one department to another.

"The Government is not distracted by minor bureaucratic issues. We are focused on rolling out the Preschool Investment and Reform Plan to ensure all children have the opportunity to attend preschool the year before school.

More/...

“Our 2009/10 Budget delivers an extra \$21 million a year in NSW Government funds and a further \$21 million a year in Commonwealth Government funds to enable more children to access existing services and to provide subsidised places for another 10,500 children in the community-based sector.

The community is entitled to know what the Opposition proposes for the Community Services portfolio.

The Government’s recent budget committed \$750 million over five years to the *Keep Them Safe* reforms that followed the Wood Special Commission of Inquiry.

Working in partnership with our colleagues in the non-government sector we are making dramatic changes to the system.

“When they were in Government they ripped the guts out of the Department of Community Services. They fired 1,000 staff and closed a quarter of Community Services offices.

“The Opposition then opposed the Government’s \$1.2 billion boost in recurrent funding in 2002 to fix up the mess they made.

“The Rees Government has increased the Community Services annual budget from \$753 million in 2003/2004 to nearly \$1.6 billion in the current financial year.

“Ms Goward still hasn’t grasped what it’s about. No government has invested more in frontline Community Services than ours. Where does her party stand? We are yet to find out.”

**Media contact:            Phyllis Sakinofsky            9228 4455 / 0406 164 034**