

MEDIA RELEASE

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



Thursday 1 October, 2009

WAGGA WAGGA CHILD CARE SERVICE PROSECUTED

The licensee company and the company director of a child care centre in Wagga Wagga are the latest children's service operators to be successfully prosecuted by Community Services.

Downing Centre Local Court recently convicted Angel Child Care Services Pty Limited and its director for a range of offences relating to the operation of Angel Childcare Centre, including inadequate child staff ratios as well as unsafe, unhygienic equipment and furnishings.

Fines totaling \$8,000 were awarded against the company and its director.

Both the Department and the Minister for Community Services, Linda Burney, welcomed the Court's acknowledgement that the eight offences in the case were significant and serious.

"This service was investigated following a complaint about inadequate staff to child ratios at the service," said Ms Burney.

"Witness statements were collected, the licensee was interviewed and photographic evidence was gathered as part of the Department's investigation."

Ms Burney added that this service had a history of previous complaints and had failed to rectify recurring problems.

"Despite trying to work with the service to address ongoing non-compliance, Community Services decided that, due to the serious risk of harm to children, prosecution was the most appropriate course of action."

The successful prosecution is the eleventh this year.

Ms Burney said Community Services was serious about ensuring high standards in children's services.

"The number of services that have been successfully prosecuted over the last 13 years has increased dramatically.

"Since about 1996 the Department prosecuted, on average, two cases per year of children's services for failures to meet children's services legal obligations.

"However the Department has substantially increased its enforcement capability as part of a new strategic approach to compliance and enforcement. Since December 2007 it has successfully prosecuted 14 services, including 19 defendants, for 91 offences.

(It should be noted that a new operator has taken over the licence and the premises of the service, and the persons prosecuted in this matter are no longer involved with the service).

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