



**Media Release – 13 September 2010**  
**Foster care week – NSW NGOs say it's 'Time to Care'**

As foster care agencies across the state celebrate the achievements of their foster carers during Foster Care Week, the Coalition for Children in Care (CCC) today called for the NSW Government to acknowledge that it's time to make the care of our most vulnerable children a top priority.

The CCC is urging the Government to follow through on the recommendations of Justice Wood's 2008 Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW. Primarily they wish to see responsibility for all children in care shifted from Community Services (CS) to the high quality services of non-government organisations (NGOs) with appropriate resourcing.

"The Government is focusing entirely on the costs and not on the quality of services or the outcomes for children," said Deirdre Cheers, spokesperson for the CCC. "NGOs have a proven record in providing high quality care for 35% of children in foster care, set the standard of care, and are best placed to ensure better outcomes for children in terms of stability, attachment, education and health."

"With Foster Care Week emphasising the positive role that quality care can play in a child's life we want the Government to acknowledge that now is the time to put quality at the core of the out-of-home-care system. Getting care right takes time, it takes investment and it takes the experience, expertise and resources of child-focused NGOs."

Justice Wood's inquiry noted that the Children's Guardian had identified that children in the care of NGOs reached a higher standard of care than those cared for by Community Services which has not yet been fully accredited. The Children's Guardian has fully accredited almost all of the state's NGOs.

Over the last 20 years successive inquiries have consistently found that out-of-home care needs systemic change to become more child focused and that NGOs are best placed to deliver better outcomes for children in care.

"With futures of children and young people in care at stake the Government needs to recognise that in the short-term change requires investment," continued Ms Cheers. "However in the long-term there will be savings as the number of children in care reduces via restoration to families, via adoption, and as the department transfers its focus to working more effectively with at-risk families. This can't be put in the "too hard" basket yet again."

The CCC will continue to campaign for these changes to the child welfare system in the lead up to the state election in March 2011 to ensure the needs of children in care are at the forefront of the next NSW government's agenda.

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### **About the Coalition for Children in Care**

CCC is an alliance of 27 non-government foster care and residential care providers, formed

- in response to the NSW Government's emphasis on cost of care, rather than quality of care, and
- to ensure that Justice Wood's recommendations on out-of-home care are implemented.

The members of the Coalition for Children in Care are:

Association of Child Welfare Agencies (ACWA)	Hunter Aboriginal Children's Service
Allambi Youth Services	Kari Aboriginal Resources Inc
ANGLICARE, Diocese of Sydney	Life Without Barriers
Anglicare, Canberra and Goulburn	Mackillop Family Services
Baptist Community Services	Marist Youth Care
Barnardos	St Joseph's Cowper Inc
Benevolent Society	Samaritan Foundation
Boys Town, Engadine	Southern Youth and Family Services
CASPA	Stretch-A-Family Inc
Care South	Uniting Care, Burnside
CatholicCare, Hunter/Manning	Wesley Mission
CatholicCare, Sydney	Youth Off the Streets
CatholicCare, Wollongong	Youth Care, UPA
Centacare , Broken Bay	

Currently NGOs provide 36% of foster care, 91% of residential care and work with 85% of the High Needs children.

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