



The Hon Linda Burney MP

Minister for the State Plan
Minister for Community Services

Ms Linda Frow
Coordinator
Coalition for Children in Care
PO Box 576
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Dear Ms Frow

Thank you for your correspondence seeking a response to the election issues of the agencies making up the Coalition for Children in Care.

I note in particular the support you are seeking for an ongoing commitment to *Keep Them Safe*, the transfer of Out-of-home care to the non-government sector and the expansion of Aboriginal service provision.

As you will be aware, these are all areas of personal interest to me. I am pleased to assure you that a re-elected Labor Government is strongly committed to the protection of children and young people and will support the progression of *Keep Them Safe* reforms as the framework for the NSW child well-being and child protection system.

A re-elected Labor Government will also implement the transfer of OOHC services to the non-government sector.

I am enclosing a more detailed response to your election issues. Thank you for your ongoing support for the children and young people of NSW.

Yours sincerely

Linda Burney
Minister for the State Plan
Minister for Community Services



Coalition for Children in Care
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Our Election Priorities

Your comment

Retain *Keep Them Safe* as the framework for the NSW child well-being and child protection system.

The NSW Government initiated *Keep Them Safe* and backed it with \$750 million funding over five years. Labor is unwavering in its commitment to following through all actions in *Keep Them Safe* in order to build on the reforms that have already helped children and families. Continuing the reform of child protection will be a high priority under a re-elected Labor Government with an emphasis on building a culture of shared responsibility and achieving systemic reform to improve children's safety and wellbeing. Labor respects and values the role of NGOs and will continue to promote a culture of partnership between government and the non government sectors. The continuation of a lead Minister for *Keep Them Safe* and a coordinating unit within the Department of Premier and Cabinet will ensure the pace and effectiveness of reform is maintained.

Commit to OOHC services being delivered by NGOs, to be gradually implemented over 5 years from 2011.

Keep Them Safe clearly sets out the NSW Government's policy to transfer the majority of out-of-home care placements and case management to the non-government sector. This is a substantial reform and a transition plan is being finalised by Community Services in order to commence the transfer in the second half of 2011.

A re-elected Labor Government will implement the transfer of OOHC services to the non-government sector. Labor's plan provides for the transition of both existing and new placements and case management from Community Services to non-government agencies. This will result in over 70% of placements and case management to be provided by the non-government sector and the remainder by Community Services.

It will be necessary to increase capacity in the non-government sector in order to achieve this target. Significant work has already been undertaken to prepare for this transition. This includes the out-of-home care contract reform work Community Services is progressing in collaboration with non-government service providers, addressing adequate levels of care, case loads and unit prices. Another example is the joint non-government/Community Services foster care recruitment campaign that resulted in many new applications from potential carers. The transfer of case management of children and young people in care to the non-government agencies has already commenced.

Commit to additional transition funding upfront to facilitate the development of expanded NGO service provision and ensure that the transition process is well planned and well managed.

The transition plan, once finalised, will include the funding arrangements necessary for a careful and timely transition of placements and case management from Community Services to the non-government sector.

Commit, through fair and reasonable contracting arrangements, to funding based on the full costs of delivering accredited, quality care for all children in Out-of-Home Care.

Community Services is committed to engaging OOHC stakeholders to provide input to the reform of OOHC contracting arrangements, including the revision of costings and contracting documents. In May 2010 Community Services established the NGO Consultative Group to provide high-level advice and stakeholder input in relation to the implementation of the OOHC Contract Reform Project.

The key components of the OOHC Contract Reform Project are to:

- strengthen Community Services' contracting approach through improved capacity and consistency
- identify new and revise existing service models and placement requirements
- add to earlier work on standard unit costing and required service level intensity as applicable to all contracts (new & existing)
- develop standard contract terms and conditions
- revise performance monitoring requirements.

Commit to the establishment of a joint Government/NGO transition planning process run through the Department of Premier and Cabinet as a matter of urgency.

The Government has set up the Child Protection Advisory Group (CPAG) as a formal means to obtain input on *Keep Them Safe* and other sector reforms. The Government will continue to use CPAG, which is chaired by the Minister for Community Services, as a means to engage the OOHC sector. The Department of Premier and Cabinet is represented on this group.

Expand Aboriginal service provision and infrastructure to ensure that Aboriginal children can be placed with Aboriginal agencies.

The Government has implemented the Aboriginal OOHC Service Capacity Building Initiative to work with Aboriginal organisations to build their capacity to become strong and sustainable service providers of OOHC for Aboriginal children and young people.

The first phase of the initiative aimed to build the OOHC capacity of existing Aboriginal organisations.

The second phase is developing the capacity of Aboriginal organisations interested in becoming OOHC service providers through implementing family preservation and foster care recruitment and support services. This initiative supports the reduction in the number of Aboriginal children entering OOHC, and supports Aboriginal children in care to be placed in accordance with Aboriginal Placement Principles.

As part of *Keep Them Safe*, Community Services and AbSec are working closely with Aboriginal NGOs on building their capacity to provide effective services to Aboriginal families and communities.

Jointly develop new outcome measures for children and young people in care, with all performance measurement to occur via the Children's Guardian.

Labor recognises the importance of reliable outcome measures for children and young people in care. As part of its commitment to ensuring the safety and welfare of all children and young people, Labor will continue to work with the Commonwealth, as well as the other State and Territory Governments and the non government sector, to implement National Standards for Out of Home Care.

Adoption of National Standards is an important step in improving outcomes for all children and young people in OOHC, irrespective of where they live in Australia. Importantly, National Standards will result in the development of a common data collection and reporting framework, including the development of new outcome measures where necessary. A key purpose of this reporting framework is to drive and measure continuous improvement in outcomes for children and young people in care.