



**NATIONAL SURVEY REPORT
ON PSYCHO-SOCIAL CARE OF CHILDREN
(AND FAMILIES) IN HOSPITAL**

**AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE WELFARE
OF CHILDREN IN HOSPITAL**

AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN IN HOSPITAL

Copyright © AWCH National Headquarters, 1992

Enquiries should be directed to:

AWCH National Office
PO Box 113
WESTMEAD NSW 2145

Phone: (02) 9631 9208
Fax: (02) 9631 9390
Email: awch@awch.com.au
Web: www.awch.org.au

ISBN 0 959 1372 5 4

*Wholly funded by the NSW Department of Health
And supported by the University of Western Sydney, Nepean*

FOREWORD

As a signatory to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* Australia is committed to the value of a holistic service approach to ensure each child ‘... *such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being*’ (*Article 3*). With specific reference to health we guarantee to ‘*recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health.*’ (*Article 24*)

The health care environment of the late 20th Century is a changing one, in which high technology produces its own environmental and psychological pressures. Health care practices that evolve as a product of such change need constant review when providing for the special developmental, social and emotional needs of children.

In this context, *The National Survey Report on Psychosocial Care of Children (and Families) in Hospital* conducted by the Australian Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital (AWCH) in 1991, has brought the quality of hospital care for children to the national consciousness.

The New South Wales Health Department supports the national activities of the Australian Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital. I congratulate the Association for presenting a well documented *National Survey Report on Psychosocial Care of Children (and families) in Hospital*, and commend its outcomes to the attention of the Australian community.



R.A.PHILLIPS, M.P.,
Minister for Health Services Management.

PREFACE

Australia is an aging community but while the proportion of children is falling the absolute number of children in Australia is rising. Their needs and the health services required for them must match this increase in numbers.

People concerned about children must ensure that children get their rightful share of funds from governments at both Commonwealth and State levels. Children do not have a vote, but we do and we need to be advocates for kids and to protect their interests.

It is very timely that AWCH should carry out a National Survey Report on Psychosocial care for Children and issue recommendations relevant to the 1990s. The ageing of Australia and the recession have meant lesser funds for children and paediatric services in hospitals. At such times, the value of providing for the psychosocial needs of children tends to be undervalued and such areas are often the first to suffer when budgets are cut.

This report confirms that much has been achieved in our hospitals but existing deficiencies and further financial constraints in the future demand that we remain vigilant in protecting the gains already made and ensure continuing progress.

It is now twenty years since AWCH commenced its operations in response to a need to humanise our treatment of children in hospital, it remains an important watchdog in our community. In some ways, it is an indictment on our society that AWCH is still needed, but it is and we must be grateful, for AWCH and its continuing work.

John YU
Chief Executive
Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children
and
President, Australian Association of
Paediatric Teaching Centres

10 April 1992

This report follows a nation-wide survey of hospitals offering paediatric facilities, conducted by the Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital between October 1990 and March 1991. The focus of the survey was the various aspects of psychosocial care of hospitalised children.

The findings outlined in the body of this report include information on key policies, facilities and services currently operating in Australian paediatric wards that are of significance to the quality of psychosocial care for child patients and their families. It is envisaged that this information will:

1. provide health care personnel, hospital administrators and all those concerned with the care of children in hospitals with a comprehensive analysis of services offered in hospitals Australia-wide;
2. highlight areas of concern and shortcomings of services in terms of specific Health Care Policies recommended by the Association;
3. assist health care educators to develop relevant (comprehensive) training programmes for students on psychosocial aspects of paediatric care;
4. assist in the planning and further development of psychosocial aspects of paediatric care;
5. provide valuable statistical data for State Health Departments throughout Australia.

I would like to acknowledge the tireless efforts of the AWCH National Headquarters staff and the AWCH Librarian in the compilation of this document.

IRENE HANCOCK
NATIONAL PRESIDENT
AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE WELFARE
OF CHILDREN IN HOSPITAL

CONTENTS

BACKGROUND	11
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE	13
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	16
INTRODUCTION	23
SECTION 1	
SEPARATE PAEDIATRIC AND ADOLESCENT FACILITIES	25
SECTION 2	
PREPARATION FOR ADMISSION	28
SECTIONS 3, 4 & 5	
ACCOMODATION FACILITIES FOR FAMILIES, CHILDCARE AND VISITING HOURS	32
SECTION 6	
OTHER PAEDIATRIC FACILITIES	36
SECTION 7	
PARENT PARTICIPATION IN PATIENT CARE	40
SECTION 8	
EDUCATION/ PREPARATION FOR SPECIFIC MEDICAL TEST PROCEDURES	45
SECTION 9	
PLAY, RECREATION AND EDUCATION	47

SECTION 10	
STAFFING	53
SECTION 11	
ACCIDENT/EMERGENCY AND OUTPATIENT SERVICES	56
SECTION 12	
EVALUATION AND PLANNING	57
SECTION 13 & 14	
HOSPITAL/COMMUNITY LIAISON	
GENERAL DATA	58
APPENDIX A	
RECOMMENDED HEALTH CARE POLICY	59
APPENDIX B	
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE	69
BIBLIOGRAPHY	77