

MEDIA RELEASE

20th Anniversary UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

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CHILDREN'S WARDS SOS

With a 30-percent drop in the number of designated children's wards since 1992 – which has been to the detriment of too many young Australians – AWCH – the national Association for the Wellbeing of Children in Healthcare is calling for the immediate adoption of their ***'National Standards for the Care of Children and Adolescents in Health Services'*** by all Australian health departments and accrediting bodies.

“As we acknowledge the 20th Anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child we are calling for action now to adopt these standards”, said Michelle Sloane, CEO of AWCH.

“Approximately 35 percent of hospitals do not routinely house children separately from adults. Dedicated children's wards are important. They should provide a safe and supportive environment for sick children and their families. Placing children with adults puts children at risk of physical, psychological or sexual harm from other patients, staff or visitors.”

Michelle Sloane argues that while the growing trend of co-locating children in adult wards can be attributed to ever-increasing pressures on beds and contracting budgets – she suggests that attitudes have also changed.

“There has been a shift away from remembering that children are different from adults. They have different needs particularly when they are sick and needing care.

AWCH believes that the lessons learned in the seventies and eighties when we really began to focus on the rights of the child are being forgotten. Today of all days we need to remember these rights and our commitment to good quality, appropriate health care for our children”.

For more information contact:
Michelle Sloane
CEO
0412 267 828

Copies of the ***'National Standards for the Care of Children and Adolescents in Health Services'*** can be found at www.awch.org.au



association for the wellbeing
of children in healthcare

ABN 33 119 036 261

Bldg 7, Gladesville Hospital

Cnr Victoria & Punt Roads

GLADESVILLE NSW 2111

Tel: 02 9817 2439

Fax: 02 9879 4346

Parent Line: 1800 244 396

(outside Sydney)

E: awch@awch.com.au

W: www.awch.org.au