



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](mailto:awch@awch.com.au)

W: [www.awch.org.au](http://www.awch.org.au)

## ***Caring Together: NSW Kids A Discussion Paper***

### **A Submission from the Association for the Wellbeing of Children in Healthcare**

#### **1.0. Introduction**

Recommendation 9 of Commissioner Peter Garling's 2008 **Special Commission of Inquiry into Acute Care in NSW Hospitals** calls for the establishment of a "...*chief-executive governed statutory health corporation pursuant to s.41 of the Health Services Act 1997, a Children and Young People's Health Authority ("NSW Kids")*".

AWCH at the time endorsed this recommendation of Commissioner Garling's and we still do. While we strongly endorse the intent of what the Government has proposed, we have concerns about some specific aspects in relation to governance, structure and independence of the proposed model.

This submission will briefly touch on those areas we support and specifically address our areas of concern.

#### **2.0. The Association for the Wellbeing of Children in Healthcare**

AWCH is the national not-for-profit organisation of parents and professionals advocating for the needs of children, young people and their families within the healthcare system in Australia. AWCH has acted as the advocacy voice for these groups since its establishment 36 years ago.

AWCH has been instrumental in many advances made in the psycho-social or non-medical care of children in hospitals and healthcare settings, including:

- ❑ parents staying in hospital with their children
- ❑ open visiting hours
- ❑ recognition of the importance of play and education facilities
- ❑ increased parental involvement in all aspects of a child/young person's hospital care.

We advocate a holistic family-oriented approach to the care of children, acknowledging the vital role that the entire family plays in aiding child and young people during acute or chronic illness and in recovery.



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](mailto:awch@awch.com.au)

W: [www.awch.org.au](http://www.awch.org.au)

AWCH remains the only national organisation to provide ongoing consumer representation, information provision and support to sick children and young people and their families.

No group is more disadvantaged in the political process than children – they cannot vote, cannot hold political office, and have few opportunities to speak publicly regarding their interests. They have limited access to the formal, structural levels of political power. Children and young people need the advocacy voice of parents, health care providers, and interested members of the community to support and represent their interests and to raise issues on their behalf.

### 3.0. NSW Kids - Guiding Principles

AWCH fully supports many of these principles specifically the **establishment of an integrated model of healthcare service delivery** that puts the **patient in this case children and young people first**.

However, in the context of these *Guiding Principles*, AWCH believes that strong leadership in this area must also assert the need for comprehensive “**quality of care**” for children and young people which must embrace an understanding of the non-medical psychosocial aspects of service and patient recovery. Appropriate care for children and young people cannot just be about the quality of clinical interventions.

***Recommendation 1: That NSW Kids adopt AWCH’s National Standards for the Care of Children and Adolescents in Health Services to inform and guide the development of all future policy and practice.***

### 4.0. Proposed Model – Governance and Functions

AWCH supports the creation of a new statutory health corporation as the single governance structure for both the Children’s Hospital – Westmead and Sydney Children’s Hospital - Randwick.

AWCH also supports a direct reporting line for this new entity’s Chief Executive Officer to the Director General NSW Health.

### 5.0. Proposed Model - Age Range

There is a mismatch between the age definitions for hospital based and community based youth health services. Currently the Children’s Hospital at Westmead accepts new patients up to their 16th birthday and treats young people with a chronic illness up to their 18th birthday. The age range for most community based youth health services in NSW is 12 –

24, the age range incorporated in the draft NSW Youth Health Policy (NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health, 2010). It is also noteworthy that the Federal Government defines young people as those aged from 12 - 25 (Office for Youth, 2009).

***Recommendation 2: That NSW Kids expand its age range for the care of children and young people from 0 – 16 to encompass the age range 12- 24, in line with the NSW Youth Health Policy***

## **6.0. Proposed Model – Advisory Council**

AWCH endorses the establishment of such a Council but further recommends the inclusion of appropriate consumer representation. We believe that AWCH, as the national body representing children, young people and their families, should have a place on the Advisory Council.

***Recommendation 3: That AWCH be appointed to the Advisory Council.***

In addition AWCH believes that any advisory council should have a broad stakeholder representation. In particular we think this body should have representation from other government agencies, whose work is relevant to children. For example, the Commission for Children and Young People, as well as GPs, regional and rural services, adolescent services, and consumers. Given the remit of NSW Kids, some consideration needs to be given to including representatives who are concerned with maternity and perinatal services.

***Recommendation 4: That NSW Kids establish management structures enabling effective stakeholder representation and participation specifically including families, young people and, other relevant stakeholders working with children and young people.***

## **7.0. NSW Kids – A Branch in the Department of Health**

In recommending the establishment of NSW Kids, Commissioner Garling called for the establishment of a single, independent **statutory health corporation** not the establishment of a department within NSW Health.

AWCH is opposed to the relegation of NSW Kids to the level of a branch within NSW Health, reporting to the Deputy Director-General, Strategic Development. This is an inadequate and backward step in light of Commissioner Garling's findings. In AWCH's opinion this will achieve nothing



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](mailto:awch@awch.com.au)

W: [www.awch.org.au](http://www.awch.org.au)

to rebuild public confidence in the NSW health system's ability to respond to the very specific needs of children and young people.

To simply create a branch within NSW Health is to miss a significant reform opportunity. A branch of NSW Health does not provide the structural and reporting independence to always identify the best way forward based on evidence and to provide a true overview of all issues to do with "child health" in NSW.

The Government should move to create an independent entity reporting directly to the Minister for Health. This is a chance to put children and young people firmly on the agenda in NSW.

***Recommendation 5: That NSW Kids be established as an independent board-governed statutory health corporation with the CEO reporting directly to the NSW Minister for Health.***

#### **References:**

*AWCH et al, 2008: National Standards for the Care of Children and Adolescents in Health Services. Paediatrics & Child Health Division, RACP 145 Macquarie Street, Sydney, NSW 2000*

*NSW CAAH, 2010: The NSW Youth Health Policy: Healthy bodies, healthy minds, vibrant futures, 2010-2015. Sydney: NSW Department of Health*

*Garling, Peter SC, 2008: Final Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Acute Care Services in NSW Public Hospitals, Sydney, NSW.*

For further information please contact:

**Michelle Sloane**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Association for the Wellbeing of Children in Healthcare (AWCH)**

Building 7 Gladesville Hospital  
Cnr Punt Rd & Victoria Street, Gladesville 2111 Australia

Tel: 02 9817 2439 Fax: 02 9879 4346 Mobile: 0412 267 828  
Email: michelle@awch.com.au Web: 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