



Association for the Welfare of Child Health

MEDIA RELEASE

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The Association for the Welfare of Child Health held a roundtable discussion on 17 October with health professionals and members of the community on *Addressing the issue of children and adults being admitted to the same hospital ward*.

AWCH believes strongly that the needs of children in hospital are provided for most effectively when children are cared for in paediatric wards, without adult patients being present, and by specially trained staff. AWCH is concerned that the practice of children and adults being admitted to the same hospital ward may have adverse consequences for the treatment and recuperation of both the hospitalised children and adults in these wards.

These principles are stated clearly in two policy documents: *AWCH Health Care Policy Relating to Children and Their Families*, and the *AWCH/ACHS Guidelines for Hospital Based Child and Adolescent Care*, which is part of the program of accreditation for Australian Hospitals. These guidelines reflect best practice and all hospitals should be working towards fulfilling these guidelines for accreditation. In addition the NSW Health Department's *Guidelines for the Hospitalisation of Children* also state the need for separate care.

The Association is concerned about:

- the particular needs of children and young people being unmet
- the safety of children, as outlined in the *Children and Young Persons (Care & Protection Act) 1998* being contravened
- the system allowing unvetted adult patients into children's wards – unlike health staff caring for children and adolescents who are required to undergo criminal record checks and prohibited employment declarations
- quality care issues - incorporating skills and competencies of paediatric trained staff nursing adult patients and adult trained staff nursing children

The Association calls for an independent review of paediatric services provided in metropolitan and rural hospitals in NSW to complement the Government Action Plan (GAP) State Wide Paediatric Services Network.

The Australian Association for the Welfare of Child Health (AWCH) is a national organisation of concerned parents and professionals advocating for the needs of children, young people and their families within hospitals and the health care system in Australia. AWCH advocates a holistic family oriented approach to the care of children, acknowledging the vital role the whole family plays in a child's wellbeing.

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