

Co-location – Putting our Children at Risk

The Association for the Wellbeing of Children in Healthcare (AWCH) is disturbed by reports that Port Macquarie and other NSW Hospitals are caring for adults on the children's ward – a practice that is not in the best interests of children.

Co-location – the practice of placing children and adults together on the same hospital ward - is an issue requiring national attention.

The situation at Port Macquarie is not an isolated case.

There is clear evidence that the 'co-location' of children and young adolescents with adults in hospital wards – and other health care settings - compromises the quality of care and, in some cases, the safety of those involved.

Put simply, the treatment of children and adults doesn't mix in a range of health care settings. It can be a traumatic experience for the young patients and it can also compromise the quality of care for all concerned. There is also the risk of physical, psychological or sexual harm to these children.

Concern over the risks associated with the practice of 'co-location' has resulted in the development of the ***National Standards for the Care of Children and Adolescents in Health Services*** policy led by:

- The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP), Paediatrics and Child Health
- The Association for the Wellbeing of Children in Healthcare
- Children's Hospitals Australasia

Despite numerous attempts these standards have not been adopted by any Health Department in any state across Australia.

We call on governments, both state and federal, health departments and hospital administrators to immediately implement the National Standards, to ensure that our young children and teenagers are given the standard of care they have a right to receive.

AWCH is the national organisation which has acted as the advocacy voice for sick children and young people and their families in the health care system since its establishment 37 years ago.
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