



**Association for the
Welfare of Child Health**

RACP Congress 2006 Cairns

Lessons Learned from Advocating for Children

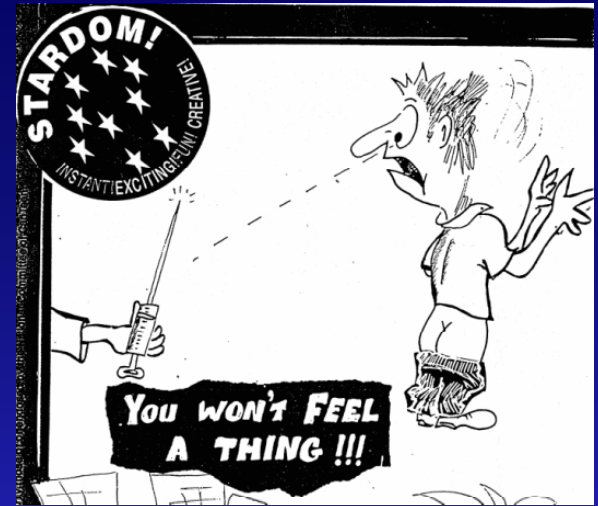
Anne Cutler

Executive Officer AWCH

AWCH (Non-Government Organisation) funded by



AWCH



AWCH is a national, non-profit organisation of *parents, professionals and community members who work together* to ensure the emotional and social needs of children, adolescents and their families are recognised and met within hospitals and the health care system in Australia.

(Established 1973)

How it used to be....

We are walking into the lobby of a huge old stone hospital building on the edge of the city. "Where are we going Daddy?" ... Mummy and Daddy bend down and tell me to be good. The lady takes me firmly by the hand and I go with her. Over my shoulder I can see my parents hand in hand walking slowly out through the heavy wooden door. To me the sister said "That's enough now, Jeanie. Big girls don't cry." ... "You want to get better don't you?" But my medical records show it was days before I stopped crying - And a long time before I was *comfortable*.



AWCH Values

- Promoting equity of access to quality care
- Supporting family involvement in health care
- Fostering partnerships between parents/carers and health care providers
- Encouraging culturally sensitive health care
- Challenging the status quo to achieve our objectives
- Valuing opinions of children, young people and their families

How it used to be....

As a former nursing sister said... 'When we were training, visiting was Sundays just from 2 to 4. We were young ourselves and we were so busy trying to get through our work we weren't really thinking of the psychological affects on the children.... You spent the morning getting them all ready, putting bows in their hair and making them look nice and then visiting was chaos and then the children would be upset when the parents left but then also after a while once they'd gone they would settle down and .. sometimes you'd say to the parents just come back and look through the window and they'd see five minutes later they'd settled down. I think we accepted it as the parents did but you do hear from previous patients who are now adults talk about how terrible it was for them.

AWCH achievements

- Parents staying with their child
- Parental involvement in care
- Child-friendly environments
- Importance of trained staff
- Importance of play & education
- Importance of supporting the family



European Association for Children in Hospital

AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparent Scheme

For many parents, family commitments, geography, finances or work mean they can't be with their child every waking minute. We look after the children when their parents can't be with them, as if we were their granny. It's letting them know that they have a special visitor, that there is someone there for them and you are not going to give them needles or treatment. They start looking for you; it's a great bonding process. There are three changes of nurses a day, being there makes you feel that you are doing something positive to help that child.'



AWCH Hospital Familiarisation Program



AWCH Information and Resource Service

AWCH Library – sample enquiries

- Paediatric nurse required information on strategies people had used when faced with a possible reduction in beds on a paediatric ward and the combination with another unit eg maternity
- A CEO of a hospital was interested in setting up a children's advisory council. What other hospitals had set one up and what information is available to advise hospitals on how to engage children and young people in this way.
- Masters degree student doing research on the effects of hospitalisation on children. Had contacted the National Library of Australia, State Library of NSW, a Children's Hospital, and a metropolitan general hospital with no significant success in obtaining references. This student was referred to AWCH which provided a bibliography of 243 pertinent references.

- Paediatric Support Link Service
- Policy information and advice
- Advocacy



need more information?



more involvement?

awch

AWCH CONTACT DETAILS

Phone: 02 9631 9208

Fax: 02 9631 9390

Email: awch@awch.com.au

Address: PO Box 113, Westmead, 2145

Website: www.awch.org.au

Parent Line: 1800 244 396 (outside Sydney)