



# A Guarantee for all Kids in Care in NSW

**A guarantee that every child and young person in out-of-home care in New South Wales will receive the services and supports that they need to thrive.**

There are 10,623<sup>1</sup> children and young people in out-of-home care in New South Wales. We know that children and young people in care often have difficulty in accessing health, education, housing, welfare services and employment. They may experience significant medical, psychological, developmental, educational and behavioural problems. Reduced and interrupted access to services means that early intervention and effective delivery of services may not take place, with an impact on both their immediate needs and long-term outcomes.

The aim of the Guarantee is to give children and young people in care access to the same supports and services available to children with strong family networks.

It is the role of the New South Wales Government, because it holds the ultimate parental responsibility for children in care, to ensure that these children receive the support and care they need in order to thrive. While this care is vested in the Minister for Community Services, many of the services that children and young people in care need to access are the responsibility of other New South Wales government departments. Just as all parents are expected to prioritise the needs of their children, the New South Wales Government must make sure that they place the needs of children in care as a high priority across all their human service departments.

The Guarantee puts into practice the New South Wales Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care<sup>2</sup>. The Charter of Rights, which is endorsed by the Minister, and the Guarantee share a common philosophy and vision for the New South Wales out-of-home care system. The Guarantee is a clear strategy to implement the rights of children in care.

The Guarantee promotes a holistic, coordinated approach to a child or young person's life. This includes, but is not limited to, looking after their physical, dental and mental health, educational opportunities, access to housing, employment and training. The Guarantee supports a child's overall development by promoting their participation in the community through engagement in recreational activities and hobbies.

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<sup>1</sup> NSW Department of Community Services, annual report 2005/2006, Chapter 4, p50.

<sup>2</sup> As per section 162 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998.

The Guarantee is a way of ensuring that children in care receive consistent and equitable support regardless of their age or geographic location. The right to services and supports are put into practice in the Guarantee (see attached document) and extend to all children and young people in care, including those in aftercare.

Investing in our children now can minimise future economic and social expenses, both for the child or young person and our community. The Guarantee is based on the best evidence of what works for children and young people in out-of-home care. Internationally, as well as in other states of Australia, governments are beginning to invest in similar commitments to children in care. In the United Kingdom, the Blair government is moving towards such a pledge. In South Australia a whole of government approach has been adopted whereby children in care are priority listed by all relevant government departments. Children in New South Wales deserve no less.

The Guarantee for all kids in care is a clear direction for policy and practice in out-of-home care.

## **The Out-of-Home Care Guarantee for all Kids in Care in New South Wales**

A Guarantee would give a commitment to all children and young people in the care of the Minister for Community Services that the New South Wales Government will prioritise their needs, health and development and ensure that important services are available when they need them up to the age of 25.

This would include fulfilling the government's role as the corporate parent of children in care by providing them with a home that offers a nurturing environment appropriate to age, the opportunity to form attachments as well as the opportunity to be connected to and participate in the community. Children in care should also be given the opportunity to retain their identity of birth family, including religious, cultural and social orientation.

### **Every Kid in out-of-home care will have:**

#### **1. Education**

An education that is supported by planning and co-ordination:

- Early Childhood Education and Care for all 0-5 year olds from when they enter care
- Individual education plans to be developed with all children and young people in care
- The right to access a child or young person's public school of choice
- Substitute care teachers accessible to support every child and young person in care as needed
- Designated liaison officers within public schools to coordinate support for any child in care attending school and to liaise with the Department of Community Services and other agencies.

The resources they need to attend and thrive at school:

- Help with school work - more individual support tailored to the child or young person through the provision of tutoring for a minimum of two hours per week for every child or young person in care requiring assistance
- Help with the costs of education and access to the same resources as their peers (eg access to computers, attendance at excursions, camps).



## 2. Health

A comprehensive health assessment within a month of entering care:

- Including general physical, oral health, sight, hearing and developmental milestones.

Regular health checks, monitoring of health and the timely provision of treatment where needed:

- Specialist multidisciplinary out-of-home care clinics<sup>i</sup> to provide follow up and monitoring where it is needed
- At least two general practitioner and dentist visits per year to monitor health, and other services as needed
- Specialist treatment and equipment where appropriate.

## 3. Transition to Independence

The help and support to live independently

- Life skills education as a standard experience for 15 and 17 year olds (eg budgeting, cooking).

A place to live that meets their needs

- The right to safe, secure and affordable housing in an appropriate location, close to transport and education/employment opportunities
- Sufficient financial support with establishment expenses.

Help to continue education, training and/or move into employment

- Access to a place in TAFE or financial support to access a university course (eg scholarships)
- Continued access to funds while in further education and training
- Additional support to assist in entering the workforce - including careers advice, developing work readiness skills, and mentoring
- Assistance to change career path if necessary.

## 4. Interests and opportunities

Resources to prioritise and support participation in sport and recreational activities

- A minimum yearly allowance to help children and young people participate in at least one (but not limited to) activity that they are interested in (eg sport, recreation, music)

Access to additional funds to support development of special interests and hobbies

- Support for every child and young person in care to further explore their interests and talents (eg attend music camps, purchase equipment).

**Developed by the Every Kid coalition in consultation with young people and the CREATE Foundation for the Every Kid campaign February 2007.**



<sup>i</sup> Based on a model of a multidisciplinary clinic that was piloted by the Sydney Children's Hospital child protection service in conjunction with the Department of Community Services in 2005.

**Working together to make NSW a place for every child and young person to thrive**  
[www.everykid.net](http://www.everykid.net)