

MEDIA RELEASE MEDIA RELEASE MEDIA RELEASE

**Embargoed until 5.00pm, Thursday 29 October 2015**

## **NSW Child Death Review Team – two reports**

The Convenor of the NSW Child Death Review Team, Acting NSW Ombudsman Professor John McMillan, tabled two reports in Parliament today.

The first is the NSW Child Death Review Team's Annual Report for 2014. The second – *A scan of childhood injury and disease prevention infrastructure in NSW* – was prepared for the Child Death Review Team by the Centre for Health Service Development at the Australian Health Services Research Institute.

**Both reports can be accessed from the Ombudsman's website ([www.ombo.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au)) after 5.00pm.**

### **Report 1: NSW Child Death Review Team Annual Report 2014**

The report examines the deaths of 485 children registered in NSW in 2014.

**'The rate of child deaths in 2014 – 28.41 deaths per 100,000 children – is the second lowest annual rate since 2000, and continues the significant decline in infant and child mortality rates over the last 15 years'** said Professor John McMillan.

**'This is a positive sign. This report nevertheless shows that more can be done to prevent child deaths in NSW.'**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were over-represented in child deaths in 2014, as has been the case in previous years. **'The rate of death for Indigenous children was 2.6 times that of non-Indigenous children, reinforcing the need for concerted and sustained efforts to address the vulnerabilities that Indigenous children face'** said Professor McMillan.

The Team also remains concerned about Sudden Unexpected Deaths in Infancy. Almost 50 infants die suddenly and unexpectedly each year. **'While rates of sudden and unexpected infant deaths have been declining, figures in this report indicate that the decline may have plateaued'**, Professor McMillan said. **'The Team will continue to monitor Sudden and Unexpected Deaths in Infancy closely to identify where prevention efforts could be better targeted'**.

In 2014, almost one in five (80) children died as a result of injury, including nine children who died in circumstances of abuse, and 22 children and young people whose deaths were attributed to suicide. Professor McMillan noted that **'significant initiatives are underway on youth mental health and suicide risk, and the Team will closely follow these developments'**.

**‘This year, the Team has directed eight recommendations to government agencies to reduce sudden and unexpected deaths of infants, as well as other significant areas, including deaths associated with asthma and house fires’** Professor McMillan said.

**‘The report also emphasises the critical role that parents and carers play in preventing child deaths and serious injury, and highlights key areas for their attention.’** In particular, Professor McMillan urged parents and carers to:

- Make sure their babies sleep in a smoke-free and safe sleeping environment: alone in bedding designed for infants, on their back with their head and face uncovered, and without loose bedding or objects
- Install and use child safety restraints in motor vehicles correctly, and make sure they are appropriate to the age and development of the child
- Closely and actively supervise young children in environments that pose a risk – especially around swimming pools and water, and around or near motor vehicles, and
- Check and regularly maintain swimming pool fences and gates, and make sure the pool barrier is always child-resistant.

On behalf of the Team, Professor McMillan extended condolences to the families and friends of the children and young people who died.

## Report 2: A scan of childhood injury and disease prevention infrastructure in NSW

A key function of the NSW Child Death Review Team is to undertake research that aims to prevent or reduce the likelihood of child deaths. In this context, the prevention of serious childhood injury and disease is also central to the Team’s remit.

**‘There is much good work and goodwill in agencies towards initiatives that have a role in childhood injury prevention’** said Professor McMillan, **‘however the Team and other injury prevention advocates have identified the need for leadership in paediatric injury prevention and management in NSW.’**

As a first step to informing this ongoing discussion, the Team commissioned the Centre for Health Service Development at the Australian Health Services Research Institute to undertake an independent preliminary scan of childhood injury and disease prevention networks, initiatives and activities in NSW.

**‘As an initial scan, the report is not intended to capture all initiatives and activities in the injury prevention field. Importantly, it demonstrates the need to develop a more comprehensive and better coordinated approach to childhood injury prevention across the state’**, said Professor McMillan.

**‘More broadly, the research also provides a useful foundation to assist the Team and injury prevention advocates in the ongoing debate on how to deliver further improvements to the safety and wellbeing of children’.**