

Embargoed until 12.30pm, Tuesday 22 November 2016

Reports of the NSW Child Death Review Team

The Acting NSW Ombudsman, Professor John McMillan, tabled two reports of the NSW Child Death Review Team (CDRT) in Parliament today:

- Child death review report 2015
- Child deaths from vaccine preventable infectious diseases, NSW 2009–2014.

Both reports will be available on the [Ombudsman's website](#) from 12.30 pm.

Child death review report 2015

'The death of any child is a profound loss, both to the child's family and to our broader community', said Professor McMillan. **'By issuing these reports, we aim to share what we have learnt from our reviews and research in order to prevent, to the degree possible, other children dying.'**

The *Child death review report 2015* is the twentieth annual report of the CDRT. It examines the deaths of 504 children aged from birth to 17 years that occurred in New South Wales in 2015.

'I can report that there is a continuing trend of reduced infant and child deaths in NSW', said Professor McMillan. **'The rate of child deaths in 2015 was the lowest since the CDRT commenced 20 years ago, at 29.61 deaths per 100,000 children.'**

'However, while the overall decline in mortality rates for children has been significant and continual, there are still too many preventable deaths', said Professor McMillan. **'It is also the case that the decline is not uniform, and our reviews have highlighted particular concerns.'**

Professor McMillan noted some of those concerns. He said that in 2015:

- **'Children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds continue to be more at risk of death – the mortality rate for these children was 2.3 times the rate of non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children.'**
- **'Injury-related causes of death are largely preventable, yet almost one in five child deaths (a total of 88) occurred as a result of injury.'**
- **'Suicide was the leading cause of death for 15–17 year olds, and the suicide mortality rate for this age group in that year was the highest since 1997.'**

Professor McMillan also noted the CDRT's ongoing concern about sudden and unexpected deaths of infants. **'Forty-two infants aged less than 12 months died suddenly and unexpectedly. Almost all of the infants who died were exposed to one or more known modifiable risk factors. It is critical that we target prevention strategies effectively.'**

The *Child death review report 2015* examines contributing factors and risks identified in reviews of the deaths of children. It makes recommendations for policy and legislative change to prevent sudden unexpected deaths of infants, drowning deaths, deaths of children in quad bike crashes and deaths by suicide.

Child deaths from vaccine preventable infectious diseases 2005–2014

As part of its research program, the CDRT commissioned research by the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) to undertake a systematic review of the deaths of children from vaccine preventable infectious diseases.

The NCIRS identified 54 cases where the confirmed or probable cause of death was a disease for which a vaccine is currently provided by the National Immunisation Program. The report concludes that 23 deaths over the 10 years were preventable or potentially preventable by vaccination, with influenza and meningococcal the most common causes of preventable or potentially preventable deaths.

Professor McMillan said: **‘This is an important report. While highlighting that immunisation has been successful in dramatically reducing the number of child deaths from infectious diseases, it shows that deaths in children from potentially preventable infectious diseases continue to occur in NSW, particularly in young infants.’**

‘We have asked NSW Health to consider the report’s observations and recommendations about immunisation which are included in the report’, said Professor McMillan.