

Minister for Community Services

Linda Burney MP



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MEDIA RELEASE

NEW MINISTER JOINS CARERS AT CARNIVAL

State Plan Priority F6: Increased proportion of children with skills for life and learning at school entry

State Plan Priority F7: Reduced rates of child abuse and neglect

State Plan Priority F4: Embedding the principle of prevention and early intervention into Government service delivery in NSW

In her new role as Minister for Community Services, Linda Burney paid tribute to the state's foster carers at a Carnival Day to mark Foster Care Week today.

"It is a great honour to attend this important event and I am thrilled that one of my first duties as Minister for Community Services is to spend time meeting children in care and their fantastic carers," Ms Burney said.

"Foster carers are special people: they open their hearts and homes to children and young people who are unable to live at home," she said.

"Their commitment to helping others and supporting young people is inspirational. This Carnival Day gives foster carers as well as the children and young people they look after an opportunity to come together in a fun and relaxed environment."

Ms Burney took the opportunity at Carnival Day to express her vision as the new minister.

"In the few days I've been in this role I have already become aware of the level of knowledge, dedication and commitment of staff and volunteers. I've met staff at a Community Services Centre in Mount DrUITT and at the head office and I look forward to meeting frontline staff across the state, in both government and non-government services.

"What is clear to me is that these people are utterly focused on providing care to our young people.

"My mission as Minister is to make sure that their efforts, under extremely difficult circumstances, are acknowledged and supported.

"I am also committed to looking at how we can do things better. The report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW, which will be delivered by retired Supreme Court Judge James Wood AO QC, will provide a new framework.

"Justice Wood's findings will impact on all agencies that deal with these issues and will set out recommendations for working together to improve the protection of children and enhance family wellbeing.

"Today, I stress that I am going to do my best for community services workers and the children and families they support."

The NSW Department of Community Services contributed \$16,000 to the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) to host the event.

The carnival included music and dancing, jumping castles, an animal farm, free swing rides and a free barbecue. Hundreds of carers and children from around the state attended.

While opening the event, Ms Burney launched a series of fact sheets for children and young people in out-of-home care, as well as their parents and carers.

"The user-friendly fact sheets were designed by Community Services to help carers understand the special educational, health and recreational needs of kids in care," said Ms Burney.

"They also provide useful tips on how carers can help children and young people reach their full potential."

The Minister said the fact sheets included information to help kids in care understand things like case meetings, which can be very stressful.

"Children and young people in care are a particularly vulnerable group. These resources will help everyone involved in their care work towards achieving the best outcomes."

The Carnival Day is one of many events being held around the state to celebrate Foster Care Week.

"The Department of Community Services and non-government organisations will be holding morning teas, award presentations and family fun days during Foster Care Week – all of which give us an opportunity to thank carers for the critical work they do."

Foster Care Week runs from 14 – 20 September.

Visit www.community.nsw.gov.au for more information

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