

**Minister for Community Services**

**Linda Burney MP**



---

**Tuesday 30 SEPTEMBER 2008**

**Media Release**

## **\$3.9 MILLION FOR RED CROSS TO HELP YOUNG MUMS WITH NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN**

Young pregnant women will benefit from a huge funding boost to a Red Cross project, Minister for Community Services Linda Burney, announced today, with Member for Coogee, Paul Pearce.

Ms Burney said the Rees Government is investing \$1.3 million each year for the next three years in a residential care service that caters for young mums both before and after the birth of their baby.

“This is a unique program because it helps vulnerable young mothers with the huge task of raising a child,” Ms Burney said.

“The Red Cross Young Women’s Health Program (YWHP) has proved to be highly successful because it offers young women, many of whom are 17 and 18 years old, with intensive support during and after their pregnancy, including a safe place to stay.

“This program aligns with the early intervention philosophy of the Department of Community Services, helping to break the cycle of child abuse and homelessness, by providing young mothers with accommodation and the health and educational services they need to give their children a good start in life, which they themselves may have been denied.

“The program includes three stages of accommodation as well as ongoing access to outreach services for up to two years.”

Mr Pearce said the YWHP has strong links with NSW Health and the South East Sydney and Illawarra Area Health Service to provide the young women with high quality maternal health services.

“It is important that these young mums have access to good local medical support as they may have experienced mental health issues and problems with drugs and alcohol,” Mr Pearce said.

“The program allows the new mums to lay the foundations for a solid family by helping them to achieve their personal goals in terms of undertaking education and training and eventual employment.”

Red Cross Executive Director Lewis Kaplan said this program is a haven for young women with nowhere else to turn.

“We provide them with guidance and support so they can make decisions about their own lives and their parenting, as well as help them to live independently,” Mr Kaplan said.

“This \$4 million funding from the NSW Government means a great deal to the young women in this program. It shows them that people do care and gives them peace of mind and confidence that support is there for them 24 hours, seven days a week, for the long haul.”

The funding, including \$80,000 for establishment costs, is part of Community Services’ Brighter Futures early intervention program to help families affected by domestic violence, drug and alcohol issues, social isolation and mental health problems. It targets problems early, enabling families to become more resilient and stronger and provide safe and nurturing environments for their children.

**Media contact: Phyllis Sakinofsky 9228 4455 / 0406 164 034**