

Minister for Community Services

Linda Burney MP



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MEDIA RELEASE

MINISTER URGES MUMS AND BUBS TO SLEEP IN THEIR OWN BEDS

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

To mark National Child Protection Week, Minister for Community Services Linda Burney today launched new resources to encourage parents to put their babies to bed safely at the Mt Druitt Community Services Centre.

Ms Burney said although parents often sleep in the same bed with babies and young children, many are not aware of the dangers this presents if they are using drugs or alcohol.

“Research has been undertaken which found that between January 2005 and December 2007 35 babies died while sleeping in the same bed with either one or both parents. In a great majority of cases, the baby’s parents had a history of drug or alcohol misuse,” Ms Burney said.

“With 29 of the babies, all aged 12 months or younger, there was evidence of the dangerous combination of parental substance abuse and co-sleeping.

“This is a devastating loss for the families involved and it is our responsibility to make sure we learn from these deaths and make other vulnerable families aware of the risks of co-sleeping when under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

“So, to reduce the numbers of these tragic yet preventable deaths, the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) has developed the *Safer Sleeping* resources.

“These new resources will help frontline caseworkers educate vulnerable families about the importance of having a separate place for their baby to sleep.

“The *Safer Sleeping* kit includes posters, wallet cards, caseworker fact sheets and fridge magnets.

“These resources will become a vital part of caseworker’s toolkits and will act as prompts for discussion as well as leaving a take-home reminder for clients about the risks of co-sleeping.”

Ms Burney said co-sleeping was often practised in Aboriginal families and DoCS has developed *Safer Sleeping* resources specifically targeting Aboriginal families.

“I would like to extend my thanks to the dedicated staff and management of Mt Druitt and Bankstown Community Services Centres who worked with DoCS Child Deaths and Critical Reports on the co-sleeping project. Their commitment was commendable. More/...

“Child Protection Week provides an important reminder of how precious and valuable our children are and provides the perfect opportunity to get the safe sleeping message out to families,” she said.

Ms Burney added National Child Protection Week is an important opportunity to build community awareness of child abuse and neglect.

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