

EVERY KID CAMPAIGN

I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners.

I am very pleased to be here today to launch the Every Kid Campaign as a part of Anti-Poverty week. Anti-Poverty week is a national initiative aimed at better informing the Australian public about the issues of poverty in our Australian community. Our Australian Anti-Poverty week is a response to International Anti-Poverty Day which the United Nations has set down for October 17th.

The Every Kid campaign goes to the heart of issues of poverty in Australia, but especially focuses on issues in NSW. The Campaign has been organised by the Every Kid Coalition which comprises 7 organisations who directly deal with the issues of child poverty and 5 other organisations have also lent their support to the Campaign. My organisation, UnitingCare NSW.ACT is involved through UnitingCare Burnside, part of our Children, Young People and Families Services Group.

The Every Kid Campaign has a very clear message:

A child's wellbeing and life opportunities should not be determined by his or her disadvantage. [without that we have the cycle of disadvantage where disadvantage is recycled through the generations]. And also, the message is that all children, young people and families in NSW, especially the disadvantaged, deserve to thrive.

At his speech this week on action against poverty by the NSW Government, the Premier, Hon. Morris Iemma, agreed that there were too many people living in poverty in NSW. While the State Government cannot do much about people's income levels, it plays an important role in alleviating poverty by ensuring that there is equitable access to services such as education, housing, and healthcare.

These are some of the alarming facts that are faced by disadvantaged children, young people, and families:

- NSW has the least accessible and least affordable system of early childhood education in Australia. An estimated 10-20% of children in NSW miss out on early childhood education and care in the year before school, compared to a 95% participation rate in most other states and territories.
- Literacy and numeracy rates for Aboriginal children, children of recently arrived refugees, children from low socio-economic status, children in rural and remote areas consistently fall behind
- In 2004-05, homelessness services gave support on 13,500 occasions where a child accompanied a parent or guardian. Over 10,000 NSW children and young people (under 18) accompanied their parent or guardian to a service and half were under the age of five.
- At 30 June 2005 10,041 children and young people in NSW were in out-of-home care. Studies have shown that children in both kinship care and foster care have poorer health, social and educational outcomes than children in the general population.
- Children in low socio-economic groups experience almost twice as many dental caries as children in high socio-economic groups.

- The number of child protection reports in NSW has more than doubled from 107,394 in 2000/2001 to 216,386 in 2004/2005. It is expected to reach 252,000 in 2005/2006.

The Every Kid Campaign is designed to confront politicians of every political party, as well as Independents, about these issues and challenge them to come to the electorate with solutions. The Every Kid Coalition has identified 5 key issues that they want addressed. These are:

- Education
- Dental Health
- Affordable Housing
- Out-of-home care
- Strong and stable families.

And within all these issues, Aboriginal health and wellbeing are of particular importance.

The Campaign comprises three elements:

- The launch here today
- Active lobbying on the issues surrounding children, young people, and families living in disadvantage
- A website designed to highlight the facts around these issues and how people can get involved in the campaign.

You will be taken through the website shortly.

I AM VERY HAPPY TO LAUNCH THIS EVERYKID CAMPAIGN AND I WISH THE ORGANISERS EVERY SUCCESS IN CONVEYING THIS IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO THE MEMBERS OF THE NSW PARLIAMENT.