

# About the Brighter Futures program

The NSW Government is committed to protecting and supporting vulnerable children and their families to ensure they have the best possible start in life. The Brighter Futures program provides targeted support to vulnerable families to prevent them from entering or escalating into the child protection system.

Australian and international research shows that early intervention services reinforce positive family relationships, increase resilience, promote healthy child development and prevent child abuse and neglect.

Brighter Futures is being rolled out across New South Wales over a five year period (2003/04-2007/08) by the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS). Over that time, DoCS will spend \$260 million to fund a range of new government and non-government services. This includes employing an additional 350 DoCS Early Intervention caseworkers and \$150 million funding to the non-government sector to provide integrated child and family services.

The program represents an innovative and pro-active approach that will complement and build on existing service networks in communities to support families showing early signs of child protection issues.

DoCS and 14 non-government lead agencies funded under the program will work to develop strong links with over 400 children and family service providers to help connect families to the services they need.



## TARGETING FAMILIES IN NEED

Brighter Futures is designed for families who have children aged eight years or younger or are expecting a child and who face specific problems. Priority of access is given to families with children less than three years of age.

Problems might include:

- domestic violence
- parental drug and alcohol misuse
- parental mental health issues
- lack of extended family or social support
- parents with significant learning difficulties and/or intellectual disabilities
- child behaviour management problems
- lack of parenting skills/adequate supervision.

## REFERRAL

There are two ways a family can become involved in the program.

- With a family's permission a community agency can refer them to a Brighter Futures program Lead Agency.
- A family that has been reported to the DoCS Helpline may be invited to join the Brighter Futures program.

DoCS will always determine a family's eligibility regardless of how the family has been referred to the program. Participation in the program is voluntary.

## TAILORED SUPPORT

Families in the Brighter Futures program will receive ongoing case management support and at least two of the following DoCS funded service options:

- home visiting
- parenting programs
- quality children's services

Brighter Futures uses a strengths-based approach. It recognises that parents already have skills and expertise when it comes to understanding what works for their family. As a result, services and support will vary according to each family's needs and will be provided for an average time of 18 months to two years to have a lasting effect.

## key facts

The Brighter Futures program has a strong evidence base. Key international and national research findings which underpin the rationale and design of the program include:

- early intervention programs that use multiple interventions work better than those using a single intervention strategy
- quality early intervention programs enable the most vulnerable children to make significant development gains
- home visiting can achieve gains for parents, particularly first time mothers and positive effects on children's development
- parenting programs reduce child behaviour problems and parental stress
- one-off interventions at a particular development stage are unlikely to have a lasting effect in protecting high risk individuals where as sustained support is more likely to deliver long term outcomes.

The Brighter Futures program aims to:

- reduce child abuse and neglect through reducing the likelihood of family problems escalating into crisis within the child protection system
- achieve long term benefits for children through improving intellectual development, educational outcomes and employment chances
- improve parent-child relationships and the capacity of parents to build positive relationships and raise stronger, healthier children
- break inter-generational cycles of disadvantage
- reduce demand for services that otherwise might be needed down the track such as child protection, corrective or mental health services.

**EVALUATION**

DoCS has appointed the highly respected Social Policy Research Centre at the University of NSW to undertake a four year independent evaluation of the program. This will allow DoCS to build upon current knowledge about early intervention services and refine the program over time to improve its effectiveness and efficiency.

**ROLLOUT**

The Brighter Futures program is being progressively introduced across the state. Brighter Futures teams are now located at the following DoCS Community Service Centres: Armidale, Bankstown, Batemans Bay, Blacktown, Broken Hill, Burwood, Campbelltown, Central Sydney, Chatswood, Coffs Harbour, Eastern Sydney, Epping,

Fairfield, Glen Innes, Gosford, Hawkesbury, Inverell, Lakemba, Maitland, Mount Druitt, Parkes, Penrith, Queanbeyan, Shellharbour, St George, Tamworth, Tweed Heads, Wagga Wagga, Wyong, Yass.

**FUNDED SERVICES: LEAD AGENCIES BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS**

<b>Metro Central (North Sydney, Central Sydney, South East Sydney)</b>		<b>Hunter/Central Coast</b>	
SDN CHILDREN'S SERVICES INC	Ashfield, Botany, Burwood, Canada Bay, Canterbury, Hurstville, Kogarah, Leichhardt, Marrickville, Randwick, Rockdale, Strathfield, Sutherland, Sydney, Waverley, Woollahra	SAMARITANS / WANDIYALI	Lake Macquarie, Newcastle
THE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY	Hornsby, Hunters Hill, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Manly, Mosman, North Sydney, Pittwater, Ryde, Warringah, Willoughby	THE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY	Cessnock, Dungog, Maitland, Muswellbrook, Port Stephens, Singleton, Upper Hunter
<b>Metro South West (South West Sydney)</b>		UNITINGCARE BURNSIDE	Wyong, Gosford
THARAWAL ABORIGINAL CORPORATION	Bankstown, Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Liverpool, Wingecarribee, Wollondilly	<b>Southern (Southern NSW)</b>	
THE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY	Bankstown, Fairfield, Liverpool	BARNARDOS	Bombala, Cooma-Monaro, Snowy River
UNITINGCARE BURNSIDE	Camden, Campbelltown, Wingecarribee, Wollondilly	BEGA VALLEY SHIRE COUNCIL	Bega Valley
<b>Metro West (Western Sydney)</b>		CARESOUTH	Kiama, Shellharbour, Wollongong
WESLEY DALMAR	Auburn, Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Holroyd, Parramatta, Penrith	MISSION AUSTRALIA	Shoalhaven
<b>Northern (Northern NSW)</b>		MISSION AUSTRALIA	Boorowa, Goulburn/Malwaree, Harden, Palerang Region, Queanbeyan, Upper Lachlan, Yass, Young
CASINO NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE	Kyogle, Richmond Valley (Excluding Broadwater, Coraki, Evans Head, Rileys Hills, Woodburn)	SDN CHILDREN'S SERVICES INC	Eurobodalla
CENTACARE	Gloucester, Great Lakes, Greater Taree	<b>Western (Western NSW)</b>	
CONSORTIUM OF NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES	Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Lismore, Richmond Valley, Tweed	MISSION AUSTRALIA	Albury, Balranald, Berrigan, Bourke, Brewarrina, Broken Hill, Carrathool, Central Darling, Conargo, Coolamon, Coonamble, Cootamundra, Corowa, Deniliquin, Greater Hume, Griffith, Gundagai, Hay, Jerilderie, Junee, Leeton, Lockhart, Murray, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera, Temora, Tumbarumba, Tumut, Unincorporated Far West, Urana, Wagga Wagga, Wakool, Walgett, Wentworth
MISSION AUSTRALIA	Kempsey, Nambucca, Port Macquarie-Hastings	THE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY	Bathurst, Bland, Blayney, Cabonne, Cobar, Cowra, Forbes, Lachlan, Lithgow, Orange, Oberon, Mid-West Regional, Parkes, Weddin
THE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY	Armidale/Dumaresq, Gunnedah, Glen Innes Severn, Guyra, Gwydir, Inverell, Liverpool Plains, Moree Plains, Narrabri, Tamworth, Tenterfield, Uralla, Walcha	UNITINGCARE BURNSIDE	Bogan, Cobar, Dubbo, Gilgandra, Warren, Narromine, Warrumbungle, Wellington
UNITINGCARE BURNSIDE	Bellingen, Coffs Harbour		

