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NSW Ombudsman

Report into the death of Ebony

On 3 November 2007, a seven year old girl died as a result of chronic starvation and neglect. The girl's parents were charged with her death, and in June this year her father was found guilty of manslaughter and her mother of murder. During the trial, the girl was known by her middle name, Ebony.

Today, NSW Ombudsman Bruce Barbour released a report outlining his findings following an investigation into Ebony's death.

The report relates to the actions of five government agencies: the Departments of Community Services; Education and Training; Ageing Disability and Home Care; Housing; and the NSW Police Force.

"My investigation shows these agencies did not work together effectively when dealing with Ebony's family" said Mr Barbour. "This lack of coordination meant vital information was not shared, and warning signs went unnoticed. This in turn led to missed opportunities for appropriate intervention to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Ebony and her siblings."

The report also outlines improvements the involved agencies have made following Ebony's death.

"It is important to remember Ebony's death was followed by a special commission of inquiry into child protection services in NSW" Mr Barbour said. "Many of the reforms recommended by that commission are aimed directly at the types of failings identified in this report and consistent with those identified through our previous child death review work."

"The current reforms carry with them risks and challenges" said the Ombudsman. "A more coordinated response to families at risk, effective information sharing and a change in culture are crucial, and without them the new system will not work. We will be watching closely to make sure these vital changes take place."