Preventing the deaths of children in NSW: latest report released

Nearly 1000 children died in NSW in the two-years 2016 – 2017, according to a report tabled in Parliament today by Michael Barnes, NSW Ombudsman and Convenor of the NSW Child Death Review Team.

*The Biennial report of the deaths of children in New South Wales: 2016 and 2017 examines the deaths of 981 children and found that 731 of them died from natural causes and 185 died from injuries.*

Of the unnatural deaths, two-thirds (119) involved unintentional injury and 66 were due to intentional injury, either suicide (54) or abuse (12).

‘The loss of a child is devastating for families, and communities, and the focus of my office and the Child Death Review Team is to reduce the likelihood of these deaths by examining the causes and circumstances and making preventative recommendations’, Mr Barnes said.

‘It is encouraging that the number and rate of deaths of children in NSW has continued to decline. Over the 15 years to 2017, the mortality rate for children aged 0-17 years declined from 41 deaths per 100,000 children in 2003, to 30 deaths per 100,000 in 2017’, Mr Barnes said.

‘However, it is important to acknowledge that this improvement has not been uniform. Children living in the most disadvantaged areas of the state and in remote areas have higher mortality rates than those living in the least disadvantaged areas and in major cities. It is also disturbing that the mortality rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is still twice that of non-Indigenous children’, Mr Barnes said.

‘Deaths as a result of injury continue to account for almost one in five child deaths. These injuries are mostly unintentional – for example, transport fatalities and drowning deaths – but in the main, they are preventable.

‘I am also deeply concerned that the rate of youth suicide has increased and is currently the highest we have seen over the past 15 years.’

The Ombudsman also tabled a research report focusing on suicide clusters and evidence-based prevention strategies for school-aged children.

‘While suicide clusters are relatively rare, they devastate families and their communities’, Mr Barnes said.

‘It is alarming that 20 children died as a result of actions by a parent or carer that directly harmed their child, or that placed the child in an environment of risk’, Mr Barnes said.

Both reports will be available on the Ombudsman’s website from 4.30pm. Read the reports [Biennial report](#) and [Review of suicide clusters report](#).

Ombudsman Michael Barnes will be available for interview.